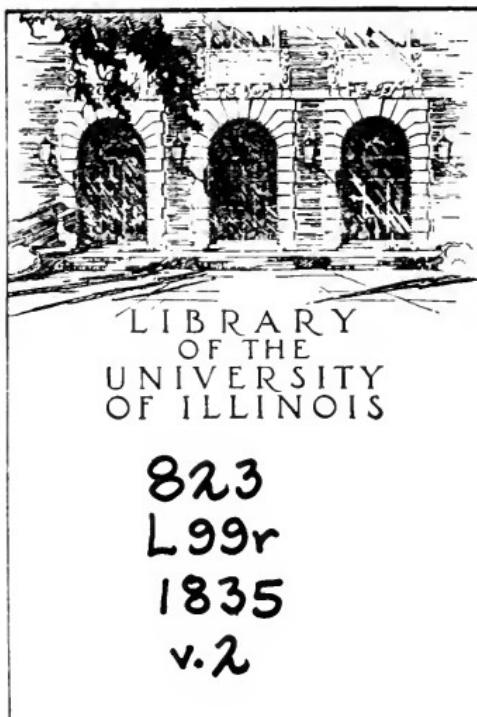


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J. E. Beadle

Gilmorby Hall

BULLWER
RILEY



R I E N Z I

THE LAST OF THE TRIBUNES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"EUGENE ARAM," "LAST DAYS OF POMPEII," &c. &c.

Then turn we to her latest Tribune's name,
From her ten thousand tyrants turn to thee,
Redeemer of dark centuries of shame—
The friend of Petrarch—hope of Italy,
Rienzi, last of Romans ! While the tree
Of Freedom's wither'd trunk puts forth a leaf
Even for thy tomb a garland let it be—
The Forum's champion and the People's chief—
Her new-born Numa thou !

CHILDE HAROLD, cant. iv. stanza 114.

Amidst the indulgence of enthusiasm and eloquence, Petrarch, Italy, and Europe, were astonished by a revolution, which realized for a moment his most splendid visions.—GIBBON, chap. lxx.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1835.

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R I E N Z I,

T H E L A S T O F T H E T R I B U N E S.

BOOK III.

T H E F R E E D O M W I T H O U T L A W.

“ Ben furo avventurosi i cavalieri
Ch’ erano a quella età, che nei valloni,
Nelle scure spelonche e boschi fieri,
Tane di serpi, d’ orsi e di leoni,
Trovavan quel che nei palazzi altieri
Appena or trovar pon giudici buoni;
Donne che nella lor più fresca etade
Sien degne di aver titol di beltade.”

Ariosto Orl. Fur. Can. xiii. 1.

BOOK III.

CHAP. I.

THE RETURN OF WALTER DE MONTREAL TO HIS FORTRESS.

WHEN Walter de Montreal and his mercenaries quitted Corneto, they made the best of their way to Rome; arriving there, long before the barons, they met with a similar reception at the gates, but Montreal prudently forbore all attack and menace, and contented himself with sending his trusty Rodolf into the city to seek Rienzi,

and to crave permission to enter with his troop. Rodolf returned in a shorter time than was anticipated. "Well," said Montreal impatiently, "you have the order I suppose. Shall we bid them open the gates?"

"Bid them open our graves," replied the Saxon bluntly. "I trust my next heraldry will be to a more friendly court."

"How! what mean you?"

"Briefly this:—I found the new governor, or whatever his title, in the palace of the Capitol, surrounded by guards and counsellors, and in the suit of the finest armour I ever saw out of Milan."

"Pest on his armour; give us his answer?"

"Tell Walter de Montreal" (said he, then, if you will have it) 'that Rome is no longer a den of thieves; tell him, that if he enters, he must abide a trial——'"

"A trial!" cried Montreal, grinding his teeth.

"For participation in the evil doings of Werner and his freebooters.' "

"Ha!"

"Tell him, moreover, that Rome declares war against all robbers whether in tent or tower, and

that we order him in forty-eight hours to quit the territories of the church.'"

"He thinks not only to deceive me, but to menace me then? Well, proceed."

"That was all his reply to you; to me, however, he vouchsafed a caution still more obliging. 'Hark ye, friend,' said he. 'For every German bandit found in Rome after to-morrow, our welcome will be cord and gibbet! Begone.'"

"Enough! Enough!" cried Montreal colouring with rage and shame; Rodolf, you have a skilful eye in thes matters, how many Northmen would it take to give this same gibbet to the upstart?"

Rodolf scratched his huge head, and seemed awhile lost in calculation; at length he said, "you, captain, must be the best judge, when I tell you, that twenty thousand Romans are the least of his force; so I heard by the way; and this evening he is to accept the crown, and depose the emperor."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Montreal "is he so mad? then he will want not our aid to hang himself. My friends, let us wait the result. At present neither barons nor people seem likely to fill

our coffers. Let us across the country to Terracina. Thank the saints," and Montreal, (who was not without a strange kind of devotion, indeed he deemed that virtue essential to chivalry,) crossed himself piously, "the free companions are never long without quarters!"

"Hurrah for the knight of St. John!" cried the mercenaries; "And hurrah for fair France and bold Germany!" added the knight as he waved his hand on high, struck spurs into his already wearied horse, and breaking out into his favourite song,

"His steed and his sword,
And his lady the fearless," &c.

Montreal, with his troop, struck gallantly across the desolate Campagna.

The knight of St. John soon, however, relapsed into an absorbed and moody reverie; and his followers imitating the silence of their chief, in a few minutes the clatter of their arms and the jingle of their spurs, alone disturbed the stillness of the wide and gloomy plains across which they made towards Terracina. Montreal was recalling with bitter resentment his confe-

rence with Rienzi; and, proud of his own sagacity and talent for scheming, he was humbled and vexed at the discovery that he had been duped by a wilier intriguer. His ambitious designs on Rome were crossed too, and even crushed for the moment, by the very means to which he had looked for their execution. He had seen enough of the barons to feel assured that while Stephen Colonna lived, the head of the order, he was not likely to obtain that mastery in the state which, if leagued with a more ambitious, or a less timid and less potent signor, might reward his aid for expelling Rienzi. Under all circumstances, he deemed it advisable to remain aloof. Should Rienzi grow strong, Montreal might make the advantageous terms he desired with the barons; should Rienzi's power decay, his pride necessarily humbled, might drive him to seek the assistance, and submit to the proposals, of Montreal. The ambition of the Provençal, though vast and daring, was not of a consistent and persevering nature. Action and enterprise were dearer to him, as yet, than the rewards which they proffered; and if baffled in one quarter, he

turned himself, with the true spirit of the knight errant, to any other field for his achievements. Louis, king of Hungary, stern, warlike, implacable, seeking vengeance for the murder of his brother, the illfated husband of Jane, (the beautiful and guilty queen of Naples—the Marie Stuart of Italy) had already prepared himself to subject the garden of Campania to the Hungarian yoke. Already his bastard brother had entered Italy—already some of the Neapolitan states had declared in his favour—already promises had been held out by the northern monarch to the scattered Companies—and already those fierce mercenaries gathered menacingly round the frontiers of that Eden of Italy, attracted, as vultures to the carcase, by the preparation of war and the hope of plunder. Such was the field to which the bold mind of Montreal now turned its thoughts; and his soldiers had joyfully conjectured his design when they had heard him fix Terracina as their bourne. Provident of every resource, and refining his audacious and unprincipled valour by a sagacity which promised, when years had more matured and sobered his restless

chivalry, to rank him among the most dangerous enemies Italy had ever known, on the first sign of Louis's warlike intentions, Montreal had seized and fortified a strong castle on that delicious coast beyond Terracina, by which lies the celebrated pass once held by Fabius against Hannibal, and which Nature has so favoured for war as for peace, that a handful of armed men might stop the march of an army. The possession of such a fortress on the very frontiers of Naples, gave Montreal an importance of which he trusted to avail himself with the Hungarian king; and now thwarted in his more grand and aspiring projects upon Rome, his sanguine, active, and elastic spirit congratulated itself upon the resource it had secured.

The band halted at nightfall on this side the Pontine Marshes, seizing without scruple some huts and sheds, from which they ejected the miserable tenants, and slaughtering with no greater ceremony the swine, cattle, and poultry of a neighbouring farm. Shortly after sunrise they crossed those fatal swamps which had already been partially drained by Boniface VIII.; and Montreal,

refreshed by sleep, reconciled to his late mortification by the advantages opened to him in the approaching war with Naples, and rejoicing as he approached a home which held one who alone divided his heart with ambition, had resumed all the gaiety which belonged to his Gallic birth and his reckless habits: And that deadly but consecrated road, where yet may be seen the labours of Augustus, in the canal which had witnessed the Voyage so humourously described by Horace, echoed with the loud laughter and frequent snatches of wild song by which the barbarian robbers enlivened their rapid march.

It was noon when the company entered upon that romantic pass I have before referred to, (the ancient Lautulæ). High to the left rose steep and lofty rocks, then covered by the prodigal verdure, and the countless flowers, of the closing May; while to the right the sea, gentle as a lake, and blue as heaven, rippled musically at their feet. Montreal, who largely possessed the poetry of his land, which is so eminently allied with a love of nature, might at another time have enjoyed the beauty of the scene; but

at that moment less external and more household images were busy within him.

Abruptly ascending a narrow and winding path in the mountain, which offered a rough and painful path to their horses' feet, the band at length arrived before a strong fortress of grey stone, whose towers were concealed by the lofty foliage, until they emerged sullenly and suddenly from the laughing verdure. The sound of the bugle, the pennon of the knight, the rapid watchword, produced a loud shout of welcome from a score or two of grim soldiery on the walls; the portcullis was raised, and Montreal throwing himself hastily from his panting steed, sprung across the threshold of a jutting porch, and traversed a huge hall, when a lady—young, fair, and richly dressed—met him with a step equally swift, and fell breathless and overjoyed into his arms.

“ My Walter, my dear, dear Walter! welcome, ten thousand welcomes !”

“ Adeline, my beautiful—my adored—I see thee again!”

Such were the greetings interchanged as Montreal pressed his lady to his heart, kissing

away her tears, and lifting her face to his, as he gazed on its delicate bloom with all the wistful anxiety of affection after absence.

“Fairest,” said he tenderly, “thou hast pined, thou hast lost roundness and colour since we parted. Come, come, thou art too gentle, or too foolish for a soldier’s love.”

“Ah, Walter!” replied Adeline, clinging to him, “now thou art returned, and I shall be well. Thou wilt not leave me again a long, long time.”

“*Mamie*, no;” and flinging his arm round her waist, the lovers—for alas! they were not wedded!—retired to the more private chambers of the castle.

CHAP. II.

THE LIFE OF LOVE AND WAR.—THE MESSENGER
OF PEACE.—THE JOUST.

GIRT with his soldiery, secure in his feudal hold, enchanted with the beauty of the earth, sky, and sea around, and passionately adoring his Adeline, Montreal for awhile forgot all his more stirring projects and his ruder occupations. His nature was capable of great tenderness, as of great ferocity; and his heart smote him when he looked at the fair cheek of his lady, and saw that even his presence did not suffice to bring back the smile and the fresh hues of old. Often he cursed that fatal oath of his knightly order which forbade him to wed, though with one more than

his equal; and the remorse of wrong embittered his happiest hours. That gentle lady in that robber hold, severed from all she had been taught most to prize—mother, friends, and fair fame—only loved her seducer the more intensely; only the more concentrated in one object all the womanly and tender feelings denied every other and less sinful vent. But she felt her shame, though she sought to conceal it, and a yet more gnawing grief than even that of shame contributed to prey upon her spirits and undermine her health. Yet, withal, in Montreal's presence she was happy, even in regret; and in her declining health she had at least a consolation in the hope to die while his love was undiminished. Sometimes they made short excursions, for the disturbed state of the country forbade them to wander far from the castle, through the sunny woods, and along the glassy sea, which make the charm of that delicious scenery; and that mixture of the savage with the tender, the wild escort, the tent in some green glade in the woods at noon, the lute and voice of Adeline, with the fierce soldiers grouped and listening at the distance, might have well suited the verse of Ariosto, and harmonized singularly

with that strange, disordered, yet chivalric time, in which the Classic South became the seat of the Northern Romance. Still, however, Montreal maintained his secret intercourse with the Hungarian King, and, plunged in new projects, willingly forsook for the present all his designs on Rome. Yet deemed he that his more august ambition was only delayed, and, bright in the more distant prospects of his adventurous career, rose the Capitol of Rome and the sceptre of the Cæsars.

One day, as Montreal, with a small troop in attendance, passed on horseback near the walls of Terracina, the gates were suddenly thrown open, and a numerous throng issued forth, preceded by a singular figure, whose steps they followed bare-headed and with loud blessings ; a procession of monks closed the procession, chaunting a hymn, of which the concluding words were as follows :—

Beauteous on the mountains—lo,

The feet of him glad tidings gladly bringing;
The flowers along his pathway grow,

And voices, heard aloft, to angel harps are singing :
And strife and slaughter cease
Before thy blessed way, Young Messenger of Peace !

O'er the mount, and through the moor,
Glide thy holy steps secure.
Day and night no fear thou knowest,
Lonely—but with God thou goest.
Where the Heathen rage the fiercest,
Through the armed throng thou piercest.
For thy coat of mail, bedight
In thy spotless robe of white.
For the sinful sword—thy hand
Bearing bright the silver wand :
Through the camp and through the court,
Through the bandit's gloomy fort,
On the mission of the dove,
Speeds the minister of love ;
By a word the wildest taming,
And the world to Christ reclaiming :
While, as once the waters trod
By the footsteps of thy God,
War, and wrath, and rapine cease,
Hush'd round thy charmed path, O Messenger of
Peace !

The stranger to whom these honours were paid was a young unbearded man, clothed in white wrought with silver; he was unarmed and barefooted;

in his hand he held a tall silver wand. Montreal and his party halted in astonishment and wonder, and the knight, spurring his horse toward the crowd, confronted the stranger.

"How, friend," quoth the Provençal, "is thine a new order of pilgrims, or what especial holiness has won thee this homage?"

"Back, back," cried some of the bolder of the crowd, "let not the robber dare arrest the Messenger of Peace."

Montreal waived his hand disdainfully.

"I speak not to you, good sirs, and the worthy friars in your rear know full well that I never injured herald or palmer.

The monks, ceasing from their hymn, advanced hastily to the spot; and indeed the devotion of Montreal had ever induced him to purchase the goodwill of whatever monastery neighboured his wandering home.

"My son," said the eldest of the brethren, "this is a strange spectacle, and a sacred; and when thou learnest all, thou wilt rather give the messenger a passport of safety from the unthinking courage of thy friends than intercept his path of peace."

“Ye puzzle still more my simple brain,” said Montreal impatiently, “let the youth speak for himself; I perceive that on his mantle are the arms of Rome blended with other quarterings, which are a mystery to me,—though sufficiently versed in heraldic art as befits a noble and a knight.”

“Signor,” said the youth gravely, “know in me the messenger of Cola di Rienzi, Tribune of Rome, charged with letters to many a baron and prince in the ways between Rome and Naples. The arms wrought upon my mantle are those of the Pontiff, the City, and the Tribune.”

“Umph; thou must have bold nerves to traverse the Campagna with no other weapon than that stick of silver!”

“Thou art mistaken, sir knight,” replied the youth boldly, “and judgest of the present by the past; know that not a single robber now lurks within the Campagna, the arms of the Tribune have rendered every road around the city as secure as the broadest street of the city itself.”

“Thou tellest me wonders.”

“Through the forest,—and in the fortress,—through the wildest solitudes,—through the most

populous towns,—have my comrades borne this silver wand unmolested and unscathed ; wherever we pass along, thousands hail us, and tears of joy bless the messengers of Him who hath expelled the brigand from his hold, the tyrant from his castle, and ensured the gains of the merchant and the hut of the peasant."

" *Pardieu,*" said Montreal with a stern smile, " I ought to be thankful for the preference shown to me; I have not yet received the commands, nor felt the vengeance, of the Tribune ; yet, methinks, my humble castle lies just within the patrimony of St. Peter."

" Pardon me, signor cavalier," said the youth ; " but do I address the renowned knight of St. John, warrior of the Cross, yet leader of banditti ? "

" Boy, you are bold ; I am Walter de Montreal."

" I am bound, then, sir knight, to your castle."

" Take care how thou reach it before me, or thou standest a fair chance of a quick exit. How now, my friends ? " seeing that the crowd at these words gathered closer round the messenger, " Think ye that I, who have my mate in kings, would find a victim in an unarmed boy ? Fie ! give

way—give way. Young man, follow me homeward; you are safe in my castle as in your mother's arms." So saying, Montreal, with great dignity and deliberate gravity, rode slowly towards his castle, his soldiers, wondering, at a little distance, and the white-robed messenger following with the crowd, who refused to depart; so great was their enthusiasm, that they even ascended to the gates of the dreaded castle, and insisted on waiting without until the return of the youth assured them of his safety.

Montreal who, however lawless elsewhere, strictly preserved the rights of the meanest boor in his immediate neighbourhood; and rather affected popularity with the poor, bade the crowd enter the court-yard, ordered his servitors to provide them with wine and refreshment, regaled the good monks in his great hall, and then led the way to a small room, where he received the messenger.

"This," said the youth, "will best explain my mission," as he placed a letter before Montreal.

The knight cut the silk with his dagger, and read the epistle with great composure.

"Your Tribune," said he, when he had finished it,

“ has learned the laconic style of power very soon. He orders me to render this castle and vacate the Papal Territory within ten days. He is obliging ; I must have breathing time to consider the proposal ; be seated, I pray you, young sir. Forgive me, but I should have imagined that your lord had enough upon his hands with his Roman barons, to make him a little more indulgent to us foreign visitors. Stephen Colonna—”

“ Is returned to Rome, and has taken the oath of allegiance; the Savelli, the Orsini, the Frangipani, have all subscribed their submission to the *Buono Stato.*”

“ How !” cried Montreal, in great surprise.

“ Not only have they returned, but they have submitted to the dispersion of all their mercenaries, and the dismantling of all their fortifications. The iron of the Orsini palace now barricades the Capitol, and the stonework of the Colonna and the Savelli has added new battlements to the gates of the Lateran and St. Laurence.”

“ Wonderful man !” said Montreal, with reluctant admiration ; “ by what means was this effected ? ”

“A stern command and a strong force to back it. At the first sound of the great bell, twenty thousand Romans rise in arms. What to such an army are the brigands of an Orsini or a Colonna? —Sir knight, your valour and renown make even Rome admire you; and I, a Roman bid you beware.”

“Well, I thank thee—thy news, friend, robs me of breath. So the barons submit then?”

“Yes; on the first day, one of the Colonna, the lord Adrian, took the oath; within a week, Stephen assured of safe conduct, left Palestrina, the Savelli in his train; the Orsini followed—even Martino di Porto has silently succumbed.”

“The Tribune—but is that his dignity?—methought he was to be king,—”

“He was offered, and refused, the title. His present rank, which arrogates no patrician honours, went far to conciliate the nobles.”

“A wise knave!—I beg pardon, a sagacious prince! — Well, then, the Tribune lords it mightily I suppose over the great Roman names?”

“Pardon me—he enforces impartial justice

from peasant or patrician ; but he preserves to the nobles all their just privileges and legal rank."

" Ha !—and the vain puppets, so they keep the semblance, scarce miss the substance—I understand. But this shows genius—the Tribune is unwed, I think. Does he look among the Colonna for a wife ? "

" Sir knight, the Tribune is already married ; within three days after his ascension to power, he won and bore home the daughter of the baron de Raselli."

" Raselli ! no great name ; he might have done better."

" But it is said," resumed the youth smiling, " that the Tribune will shortly be allied to the Colonna, through his fair sister the Signora Irene. The baron di Castello wooes her."

" What Adrian Colonna ! Enough ! you have convinced me that a man who contents the people and awes or conciliates the nobles is born for empire. My answer to this letter, I will convey myself. For your news, sir messenger, accept this jewel ", and the knight took from his finger a gem of some

price. “ Nay, shrink not, it was as freely given to me, as it is now to thee.”

The youth who had been agreeably surprised, and impressed, by the manner of the renowned freebooter, and who was not a little astonished himself at the ease and familiarity with which he had been relating to Frà Moreale, in his own fortress, the news of Rome, bowed low as he accepted the gift.

The astute Provençal who saw the evident impression he had made, perceived also that it might be of advantage in delaying the measures he might deem it expedient to adopt. “ Assure the Tribune,” said he, on dismissing the messenger, “ shouldst thou return ere my letter arrive, that I admire his genius, hail his power, and will not fail to consider as favourably as I may of his demand.”

“ Better,” said the messenger warmly (he was of good blood, and gentle bearing),—“ better ten tyrants for our enemy, than one Montreal.”

“ An enemy! believe me, sir, I seek no enmity with princes that know how to govern, or a people that has the wisdom at once to rule and to obey.”

The whole of that day, however, Montreal remained thoughtful and uneasy; he dispatched trusty messengers to the governor of Aquila, (who was then in correspondence with Louis of Hungary,) to Naples, and to Rome;—the last charged with a letter to the Tribune, which without absolutely compromising himself, affected submission, and demanded only a longer leisure for the preparations of departure. But, at the same time, fresh fortifications were added to the castle, ample provisions were laid in, and, night and day, spies and scouts were stationed along the pass, and in the town of Terracina. Montreal was precisely the chief who prepared most for war when most he pretended peace.

One morning, the fifth from the appearance of the Roman messenger, Montreal after narrowly surveying his outworks and his stores, and feeling satisfied that he could hold out at least a month's siege, repaired, with a gayer countenance than he had lately worn, to the chamber of Adeline.

The lady was seated by the casement of the tower, from which might be seen the glorious landscape of woods, and vales, and orange

groves—a strange garden for such a palace! As she leant her face upon her hand, with her profile slightly turned to Montreal, there was something inexpressibly graceful in the bend of her neck,—the small head so expressive of gentle blood,—with the locks parted in front in that simple fashion which modern times have so happily revived. But the expression of the half-averted face, the abstracted intentness of the gaze, and the profound stillness of the attitude, were so ineffably sad and mournful, that Montreal's purposed greeting of gallantry and gladness died upon his lips. He approached in silence, and laid his hand upon her shoulder.

Adeline turned, and taking the hand in hers pressed it to her heart, and smiled away all her sadness. “Dearest,” said Montreal, “couldst thou know how much any shadow of grief on thy bright face darkens my heart, thou wouldst never grieve. But no wonder that in these rude walls—no female of equal rank near thee, and such mirth as Montreal can summon to his halls, grating to thy ear—no wonder that thou repen~~test~~ thee of thy choice.”

"Ah, no, no, Walter, I never repent; shame on me for saying so. I did but think of our child as you entered. Alas! he was our only child! How fair he was, Walter; how he resembled thee!"

"Nay, he had thine eyes and brow," replied the knight, with a faltering voice, and turning away his head.

"Walter," resumed the lady, sighing, "do you remember—this is his birthday. He is ten years old to-day. We have loved each other eleven years, and thou hast not tired yet of thy poor Adeline."

"As well might the saints weary of paradise," replied Montreal with an enamoured tenderness, which changed into softness the whole character of his heroic countenance.

"Could I think so, I should indeed be blest!" answered Adeline. "But a little while longer, and the few charms I yet possess must fade; and what other claim have I on thee?"

"All claim;—the memory of thy first blushes—thy first kiss—of thy devoted sacrifices—of thy patient wanderings—of thy uncomplaining love!

Ah, Adeline, we are of Provence, not of Italy; and when did knight of Provence avoid his foe, or forsake his love. But come, dearest, enough of home and melancholy for to-day. I come to bid thee forth. I have sent on the servitors to pitch our tent beside the sea,—we will enjoy the orange blossoms while we may. Ere another week pass over us, we may have sterner pastime and closer confines."

"How, dearest Walter, thou dost not apprehend danger?"

"Thou speakest, lady-bird," said Montreal, laughing, "as if danger were novelty; methinks by this time, thou shouldst know it as the atmosphere we breathe."

"Ah, Walter, is this to last for ever? Thou art now rich and renowned; canst thou not abandon this career of strife?"

"Now, out on thee, Adeline! what are riches and renown but the means to power? And for strife, the shield of warriors was my cradle—pray the saints it be my bier! These wild and wizard extremes of life—from the bower to the tent—from the cavern to the palace—to-day a

wandering exile, to-morrow the equal of kings—make the true element of the chivalry of my Norman sires. Normandy taught me war, and sweet Provençal love. Kiss me, dear Adeline; and now let thy handmaids attire thee. Forget not thy lute, sweet one. We will rouse the echoes with the songs of Provençal.”

The ductile temper of Adeline yielded easily to the gaiety of her lord; and the party soon sallied from the castle towards the spot in which Montreal had designed their resting place during the heats of day. But already prepared for all surprise, the castle was left strictly guarded, and besides the domestic servitors of the castle, a detachment of ten soldiers, completely armed, followed the pair. Montreal himself wore his corslet, and his 'quires followed with his helmet and lance. Beyond the narrow defile at the base of the castle, the road at that day opened into a broad patch of verdure, circled on all sides, save that open to the sea, by wood, interspersed with myrtle and orange, and a wilderness of odorous shrubs. In this space, and sheltered by the broad-spreading and classic *fagus*, (so improperly

translated into the English *beech*,) a gay pavilion was prepared, which commanded the view of the sheen and sparkling sea;—shaded from the sun, but open to the gentle breeze. This was poor Adeline's favourite recreation, if recreation it might be called. She rejoiced to escape from the gloomy walls of her castellated prison, and to enjoy the sunshine and the sweets of that voluptuous climate without the fatigue which of late all exercise occasioned her. It was a gallantry on the part of Montreal, who foresaw how short an interval might elapse before the troops of Rienzi besieged his walls ; and who was himself, no less at home in the bower than in the field.

As they reclined within the pavilion—the lover and his lady,—of the attendants without, some lounged idly on the beach ; some prepared the awning of a pleasure boat against the decline of the sun ; some, in a ruder tent, out of sight in the wood, arranged the mid-day repast : while the strings of the lute, touched by Montreal himself with a careless skill, gave their music to the dreamy stillness of the noon.

While thus employed, one of Montreal's scouts arrived breathless and heated at the tent.

"Captain," said he, "a company of thirty lances completely armed, with a long retinue of 'squires and pages has just quitted Terracina. Their banners bear the two-fold insignia of Rome and the Colonna."

"Ho!" said Montreal gaily, "such a troop is a welcome addition to our company; send our 'squire hither."

The 'squire appeared.

"Hie thee on thy steed towards the procession thou wilt meet with in the pass, (nay, sweet lady mine, no forbiddal!) seek the chief, and say that the good knight Walter de Montreal sends him greeting, and prays him in passing our proper territory, to rest awhile with us, a welcome guest; and—stay,—add, that if to while an hour or so in gentle pastime be acceptable to him, Walter de Montreal would rejoice to break a lance with him, or any knight in his train, in honour of our respective ladies. Hie thee quick!"

"Walter, Walter," began Adeline who had that

keen and delicate sensitiveness to her situation, which her reckless lord often wantonly forgot, “Walter, dear Walter, canst thou think it honour to ——”

“Hush thee, sweet *Fleur de lis!* Thou hast not seen pastime this many a day; I long to convince thee that thou art still the fairest lady of Italy, ay, and of Christendom. But these Italians are craven knights, and thou needst not fear that my proffer will be accepted. But in truth, lady mine, I rejoice for graver objects, that chance throws a Roman noble, perhaps a Colonna, in my way; —women understand not these matters; and aught concerning Rome touches us home at this moment.”

With that the knight frowned, as was his wont in thought, and Adeline ventured to say no more, but retired to the interior division of the pavilion.

Meanwhile the 'squire approached the procession that had now reached the middle of the pass. And a stately and gallant company it was:—if the complete harness of the soldiery seemed to attest a warlike purpose, it was contradicted on the other hand by the numerous

train of unarmed 'squires and pages gorgeously attired, while the splendid blazon of two heralds preceding the standard bearers, proclaimed their object as peaceful, and their path as sacred. It required but a glance at the company to tell the leader ;—Arrayed in a breast-plate of steel, wrought profusely with gold arabesques, over which was a mantle of dark green velvet, bordered with pearls, while above his long dark locks waved a black ostrich plume in a high Macedonian cap, such as I believe, is now worn by the Grand Master of the order of St. Constantine, rode in the front of the party, a young cavalier, distinguished from his immediate comrades, partly by his graceful presence, and partly by his splendid dress.

The 'squire approached respectfully, and dismounting, delivered himself of his charge.

The young cavalier smiled, as he answered, "Bear back to sir Walter de Montreal, the greeting of Adrian Colonna, Baron di Castello, and say, that the solemn object of my present journey will scarce permit me to encounter the formidable lance of so celebrated a knight, and I regret this the more, inasmuch as I may not yield to any dame, the palm

of my liege lady's beauty. I must live in hope of a happier occasion. For the rest, I will cheerfully abide for some few hours the guest of so courteous a host."

The 'squire bowed low. "My master," said he hesitatingly, "will grieve much to miss so noble an opponent. But my message refers to all this knightly and gallant train; and if the lord Adrian di Castello deems himself forbidden the joust by the object of his present journey, surely one of his comrades will be his proxy with my master."

Out and quickly spoke a young noble by the side of Adrian, Riccardo Annibaldi, who afterwards did good service both to the Tribune and to Rome, and whose valour brought him, in later life, to an untimely end.

"By the lord Adrian's permission," cried he, "I will break a lance with ——."

"Hush! Annibaldi," interrupted Adrian. "And you, sir 'squire, know, that Adrian di Castello permits no proxy in arms. Advise the knight of St. John that we accept his hospitality, and if after some converse on graver matters he should still desire so light an entertainment, I will

forget that I am the ambassador to Naples, and remember only that I am a knight of the empire. You have your answer."

The 'squire with much ceremony made his obeisance, remounted his steed, and returned in a half-gallop to his master.

"Forgive me, dear Annibaldi," said Adrian, "that I balked your valour, and believe me that I never more longed to break a lance against any man than I do against this boasting Frenchman. But bethink you, that though to us, brought up in the dainty laws of chivalry, Walter de Montreal is the famous knight of Provençé, to the Tribune of Rome, whose grave mission we now fulfil, he is but the mercenary captain of a Free Company. Grievously in his eyes should we sully our dignity by so wanton and irrelevant a holiday conflict with a declared and professional brigand."

"For all that," said Annibaldi, "he ought not to boast that a Roman knight shunned a Provençal lance."

"Cease, I pray thee!" said Adrian impatiently. In fact the young Colonna already chafed bitterly against his discreet and dignified rejection of Mon-

treal's proffer; and recollecting with much pique the disparaging manner in which the Provençal had spoken of the Roman chivalry, as well as a certain tone of superiority which in all warlike matters Montreal had assumed over him, he now felt his cheek burn, and his lip quiver. Highly skilled in the martial accomplishments of his time, he had a natural and excusable desire to prove that he was at least no unworthy antagonist even of the best lance in Italy: and, added to this, the gallantry of the age made him feel it a sort of treason to his mistress to forego any means of asserting her perfections.

It was therefore with considerable irritation that Adrian, as the pavilion of Montreal became visible, perceived the 'squire returning to him. And the reader will judge how much this was increased when the latter, once more dismounting, accosted him thus :

" My master, the knight of St. John, on hearing the courteous answer of the Lord Adrian di Castello, bids me say, that lest the graver converse the Lord Adrian refers to should mar gentle and friendly sport, he ventures respectfully to suggest,

that the tilt should preface the converse. The sod before the tent is so soft and smooth, that even a fall could be attended with *no danger* to knight or steed."

"By our lady!" cried Adrian and Annibaldi in a breath, "but thy last words are discourteous; and," (proceeded Adrian recovering himself) "since thy master will have it, let him look to his horse's girths. I will not gainsay his fancy."

Montreal, who had thus insisted upon the exhibition, partly, it may be, from the gay and ruffling bravado, common still amongst his brave countrymen; partly because he was curious of exhibiting before those who might soon be his open foes, his singular and unrivalled address in arms, was yet more moved to it on learning the name of the leader of the Roman company; for his vain and haughty spirit, however it had disguised resentment at the time, had by no means forgiven certain warm expressions of Adrian in the palace of Stephen Colonna, and in the unfortunate journey to Corneto. While Adrian, halting at the entrance of the defile, aided by his 'squires, indignantly, but carefully indued the rest of his armour,

and saw, himself, to the girths, stirrup-leathers, and various buckles in the caparison of his noble charger, Montreal in great glee kissed his lady, who, though too soft to be angry, was deeply vexed, (and yet her vexation half-forgotten in fear for his safety), snatched up her scarf of blue, which he threw over his breast-plate, and completed his array with the indifference of a man certain of victory. He was destined, however, to one disadvantage, and that the greatest ; his armour and lance had been brought from the castle—not his war-horse. His palfrey was too slight to bear the great weight of his armour, nor amongst his troop was there one horse that for power and bone could match with Adrian's. He chose, however, the strongest that was at hand, and a loud shout from his wild followers testified their admiration when he sprung unaided from the ground into the saddle—a rare and difficult feat of agility in a man completely arrayed in the ponderous armour which issued at that day from the forges of Milan, and was worn far more weighty in Italy than any other part of Europe. While both companies grouped slowly,

and mingled in a kind of circle round the green sward, and the Roman heralds with bustling importance attempted to marshal the spectators into order, Montreal rode his charger round the sward, forcing it into various carakolets, and exhibiting, with the vanity that belonged to him, his exquisite and practised horsemanship.

At length Adrian, his visor down, rode slowly into the green space amidst the cheers of his party. The two knights, at either end, gravely fronted each other; they made the courtesies with their lances, which, in friendly and sportive encounters, were customary; and as they thus paused for the signal of encounter; the Italians trembled for the honor of their chief, Montreal's stately height and girth of chest forming a strong contrast, even in armour, to the form of his opponent, which was rather under the middle standard; and though firmly knit, slightly and slenderly built. But to that perfection was skill in arms brought in those chivalric times, that great strength and size were far from being either the absolute requisites, or even the usual attributes, of the more celebrated knights; in

fact, so much was effected by the power and the management of the steed, that a light weight in the rider was often rather to his advantage than his prejudice : and, even at a later period, the most accomplished victors in the tourney, the French Bayard and the English Sydney, were far from remarkable either for bulk or stature.

Whatever the superiority of Montreal in physical power, was also largely compensated by the inferiority of his horse, which, though a thick-built and strong Calabrian, had neither the blood, bone, nor practised discipline of the northern charger of the Roman. The shining coat of the latter, coal black, was set off by a scarlet cloth wrought in gold ; the neck and shoulders were clad in scales of mail ; and from the forehead projected a long point, like the horn of an unicorn, while on its crest waved a tall plume of scarlet and white feathers. As the mission of Adrian to Naples was that of pomp and ceremony to a court of great splendour, so his array and retinue were befitting the occasion and the passion for shew that belonged to the time ; and the very bridle of his horse, which was three inches broad, was decorated with gold, and even jewels The knight himself was clad in

mail, which had tested the finest art of the celebrated Ludovico of Milan; and, altogether, his appearance was unusually gallant and splendid, and seemed still more so beside the plain but brightly polished, and artfully flexible armour of Montreal, (adorned only with his lady's scarf,) and the common and rude mail of his charger. This contrast, however, was not welcome to the Provençal, whose vanity was especially indulged in warlike equipments ; and who, had he foreseen the ‘ pastime ’ that awaited him, would have outshone even the Colonna.

The trumpeters of either party gave a short blast—the knights remained erect as statues of iron ; a second, and each slightly bent over his saddle-bow ; a third, and with spears couched, slackened reins, and at full speed, on they rushed, and fiercely they met midway. With the reckless arrogance which belonged to him, Montreal had imagined that at the first touch of his lance Adrian would have been unhorsed ; but to his great surprise the young Roman remained firm, and amidst the shouts of his party, passed on to the other end of the lists.

Montreal himself was rudely shaken, but lost neither seat nor stirrup.

"This can be no carpet knight," muttered Montreal between his teeth, as, this time, he summoned all his skill for a second encounter. While Adrian, aware of the great superiority of his charger, resolved to bring it to bear against his opponent. Accordingly, when the knights again rushed forward, Adrian, covering himself well with his buckler, directed his care less against the combatant, whom he felt no lance wielded by mortal hand was likely to dislodge, than against the less noble animal he bestrode. The shock of Montreal's charge was like an avalanche—his lance shivered into a thousand pieces, Adrian lost both stirrups, and but for the strong iron bows which guarded the saddle in front and rear, would have been fairly unhorsed; as it was, he was almost doubled back by the encounter, and his ears rung and his eyes reeled, so that for a moment or two he almost lost all consciousness. But his steed had well repaid its nurture and discipline. Just as the combatants closed, the animal rearing on high, pressed forward with its mighty crest against its opponent with a force so

irresistible as to drive back Montreal's horse several paces ; while Adrian's lance, poised with exquisite skill, striking against the Provençal's helmet, somewhat rudely diverted the knight's attention for the moment from his rein. Montreal, drawing the curb too tightly in the suddenness of his recovery, the horse reared on end ; and, receiving at that instant, full upon his breast-plate, the sharp horn and mailed crest of Adrian's charger—fell back over its rider upon the sward. Montreal disengaged himself in great rage and shame, as a faint cry from his pavilion reached his ear, and redoubled his mortification. He rose with a lightness which astonished the beholder ; for so heavy was the armour worn at that day, that few knights once stretched upon the ground could rise without assistance ; and drawing his sword, cried out fiercely—" On foot, on foot!—the fall was not mine, but this accursed beast's, that I must needs for my sins raise to the rank of a charger. Come on——"

" Nay, sir Knight," said Adrian, drawing off his gauntlets and unbuckling his helmet, which he threw on the ground, " I come to thee a guest and a friend ; but to fight on foot is the encounter

of mortal foes. Did I accept thy offer, my defeat would but stain thy knighthood."

Montreal, whose passion had beguiled him for the moment, sullenly acquiesced in this reasoning. Adrian hastened to soothe his antagonist. "For the rest," said he, "I cannot pretend to the prize. Your lance lost me my stirrups—mine left you unshaken. You say right; the defeat, if any, was that of your steed."

"We may meet again when I am more equally horsed," said Montreal, still chafing.

"Now, our lady forbid," exclaimed Adrian with so devout an earnestness that the bystanders could not refrain from laughing, and even Montreal, grimly and half-reluctant, joined in the merriment. The courtesy of his foe, however, conciliated and touched the more frank and soldierly qualities of his nature, and composing himself, he replied:—

"Signor di Castello,—I rest your debtor for a courtesy that I have but little imitated. Howbeit, if thou wouldest bind me to thee for ever, thou wilt suffer me to send for my own charger, and afford me a chance to retrieve mine honour. With that steed, or with one equal to thine, which

seems to me of the English breed, I will gage all I possess, lands, castle, and gold, sword and spurs, to maintain this pass, one by one, against all thy train."

Fortunately, perhaps, for Adrian, ere he could reply, Riccardo Annibaldi cried with great warmth, "Sir knight, I have with me two steeds well practised in the tourney, take thy choice and accept in me a champion of the Roman against the French chivalry; there is my gage."

"Signor," replied Montreal with ill-suppressed delight, "thy proffer shews so gallant and free a spirit, that it were foul sin in me to baulk it. I accept thy gage, and whichever of thy steeds thou rejectest, in God's name bring it hither, and let us waste no words before action."

Adrian, who felt that hitherto the Romans had been more favoured by fortune than merit, vainly endeavoured to prevent this second hazard. But Annibaldi was greatly chafed, and his high rank rendered it impolitic in Adrian to offend him by peremptory prohibition; the Colonna reluctantly, therefore, yielded his assent to the engagement. Annibaldi's steeds were led to the spot, the one

a noble roan, the other a bay, of somewhat less breeding and bone, but still of great strength and price. Montreal finding the choice pressed upon, gallantly selected the latter and less excellent.

Annibaldi was soon arrayed for the encounter, and Adrian gave the word to the trumpeters. The Roman was of a stature almost equal to that of Montreal, and though some years younger, seemed, in his armour, nearly of the same thews and girth, so that the present antagonists appeared at the first glance more evenly matched than the last. But this time Montreal, well horsed, inspired to the utmost by shame and pride, felt himself a match for an army; and he met the young baron with such prowess, that while the very plume on his casque seemed scarcely stirred, the Italian was thrown several paces from his steed, and it was not till some moments after his visor was removed by his 'squires that he recovered his senses. This event restored Montreal to all his natural gaiety of humour, and effectually raised the spirits of his followers, who had felt much humbled by the previous encounter.

He himself assisted Annibaldi to rise with great courtesy, and a profusion of compliments, which the proud Roman took in stern silence, and then led the way to the pavilion, loudly ordering the banquet to be spread. Annibaldi, however, loitered behind, and Adrian, who penetrated his thoughts, and who saw that over their cups a quarrel between the Provençal and his friend was very likely to ensue, drawing him aside, said:—“Methinks, dear Annibaldi, it would be better, if you, with the chief of our following, were to proceed onward to Fondi, where I will join you at sunset. My 'squires, and some eight lances, will suffice for my safeguard here, and, to say truth, I desire a few private words with our strange host, in the hope that he may be peaceably induced to withdraw from hence without the help of our Roman troops, who have enough elsewhere to feed their valour.

Annibaldi pressed his companion's hands; “I understand thee,” he replied with a slight blush, “and indeed I could but ill brook the complacent triumph of the barbarian. I accept thy offer.”

CHAP. III.

THE CONVERSE BETWEEN THE ROMAN AND THE
PROVENÇAL—ADELINE'S HISTORY—THE MOON-
LIGHT SEA—THE LUTE AND THE SONG.

HAVING seen Annibaldi with the greater part of his retinue depart, and divesting himself of his heavy greaves, Adrian entered alone the pavilion of the knight of St. John. Montreal had already doffed all his armour, save the breast-plate, and he now stepped forward to welcome his guest with the winning and easy grace which better suited his birth than his profession. He received Adrian's excuses for the absence of Annibaldi and the other knights of his train with a smile which seemed to prove how readily he divined the cause, and conducted him to the

other and more private division of the pavilion in which the repast (rendered acceptable by the late exercise of guest and host) was prepared ; and here Adrian for the first time discovered Adeline. Long enurement to the various and roving life of her lover, joined to a certain pride which she derived from conscious, though forfeited, rank, gave to the outward manner of that beautiful lady an ease and freedom which often concealed, even from Montreal, her sensitiveness to her unhappy situation. At times, indeed, when alone with Montreal, whom she loved with all the devotion of romance, she was sensible only to the charm of a presence which consoled her for all things; but in his frequent absence, or on the admission of any stranger, the illusion vanished—the reality returned. Poor lady ! nature had not formed—education had not reared—habit had not reconciled—her to the breath of shame !

The young Colonna was much struck by her beauty, and more by her gentle and high-born grace. Like her lord she appeared younger than

she was ; time seemed to spare a bloom which an experienced eye might have told was destined to an early grave ; and there was something almost girlish in the lightness of her form—the braided luxuriance of her rich auburn hair, and the colour that went and came, not only with every movement, but almost with every word. The contrast between her and Montreal became them both—it was the contrast of devoted reliance and protecting strength : each looked fairer in the presence of the other :—and as Adrian sate down to the well-laden board, he thought he had never seen a pair more formed for the poetic legends of their native Troubadours.

Montreal conversed gaily upon a thousand matters—pressed the wine flasks—and selected for his guests the most delicate portions of the delicious *spicola* of the neighbouring sea, and the rich flesh of the wild boar of the Pontine marshes.

“ Tell me,” said Montreal, as their hunger was now appeased—“ tell me, noble Adrian, how fares your kinsman, Signor Stephen ? A brave old man for his years.”

"He bears him as the youngest of us," answered Adrian.

"Late events must have shocked him a little," said Montreal with an arch smile. "Ah, you look grave—yet commend my foresight—I was the first who prophesied to thy kinsman the rise of Cola di Rienzi; he seems a great man—never more great than in conciliating the Colonna and the Orsini."

"The Tribune," returned Adrian evasively, "is certainly a man of extraordinary genius. And now, seeing him command, my only wonder is how he ever brooked to obey—majesty seems a very part of him."

"Men who win power, easily put on its harness dignity," answered Montreal; "and if I hear aright—(pledge me to your lady's health,)—the Tribune, if not himself nobly born, will soon be nobly connected."

"He is already married to a Raselli,—an old Roman house," replied Adrian.

"You evade my pursuit,—*Le doulx soupir!* *le doulx soupir!* as the old Cabestan has it"—said Montreal laughing.—"Well, you have pledged

me one cup to your lady, pledge another to the fair Irene, the Tribune's sister—always provided they two are not one.—You smile and shake your head."

"I do not disguise from you, sir knight," answered Adrian, "that when my present embassy is over, I trust the alliance between the Tribune and a Colonna will go far towards the benefit of both."

"I have heard rightly then," said Montreal in a grave and thoughtful tone. "Rienzi's power, must indeed be great."

"Of that my mission is a proof. Are you aware, Signor de Montreal, that Louis, King of Hungary ——"

"How! what of him?"

"Has referred the decision of the feud between himself and Jane of Naples, respecting the death of her royal spouse, his brother, to the fiat of the Tribune? This is the first time, methinks, since the death of Constantine, that so great a confidence and so high a charge were ever entrusted to a Roman!"

"By all the saints in the calendar," cried

Montreal, crossing himself, “this news is indeed amazing. The fierce Louis of Hungary waive the right of the sword, and choose other umpire than the field of battle!”

“And this,” continued Adrian, in a significant tone, “this it was which induced me to obey your courteous summons. I know, brave Montreal, that you hold intercourse with Louis. Louis has given to the Tribune the best pledge of his amity and alliance; will you do wisely if you——”

“Wage war with the Hungarian’s ally,” interrupted Montreal. “This you were about to add; the same thought crossed myself. My lord, pardon me—Italians sometimes invent what they wish. On the honour of a knight of the empire, these tidings are the naked truth?”

“By my honour, and on the cross,” answered Adrian, drawing himself up; “and in proof thereof, I am now bound to Naples to settle with the queen the preliminaries of the appointed trial.”

"Two crowned heads before the tribunal of a plebeian, and one a defendant against the charge of murther!" muttered Montreal; "the news might well amaze me!"

He remained musing and silent a little while, till looking up, he caught Adeline's tender gaze fixed upon him with that deep solicitude with which she watched the outward effect of schemes and projects, she was too soft to desire to know, and too innocent to share.

"Lady mine," said the Provençal fondly, "how sayest thou? must we abandon our mountain castle, and these wild woodland scenes, for the dull walls of a city? I fear me so.—The lady Adeline," he continued, turning to Adrian, "is of a singular bias; she hates the gay crowds of streets and thoroughfares, and esteems no palace like the solitary outlaw's hold. Yet methinks she might outshine all the faces of Italy,—thy mistress, lord Adrian, of course excepted."

"It is an exception which only a lover, and that too a betrothed lover, would dare to make," replied Adrian gallantly.

"Nay," said Adeline, in a voice singularly sweet and clear, "nay, I know well at what price to value my lord's flattery, and Signor di Castello's courtesy. But you are bound, sir Knight, to a court that, if fame speak true, boasts in its queen the very miracle and mould of beauty."

"It is some years since I saw the queen of Naples," answered Adrian; "and I little dreamt then, when I gazed upon that angel face, that I should live to hear her accused of the foulest murder that ever stained even Italian royalty."

"And as if resolved to prove her guilt," said Montreal, "ere long be sure she will marry the very man who did the deed. Of this I have certain proof."

Thus conversing, the knights wore away the daylight, and beheld from the open tent the sun cast his setting glow over the purple sea. Adeline had long retired from the board, and they now saw her seated with her handmaids on a mound by the beach; while the sound of her lute faintly reached their ears. As Montreal

caught the air, he turned from the converse, and sighing, half shaded his face with his hand. Somehow or other the two knights had worn away all the little jealousy or pique which they had conceived against each other at Rome. Both imbued with the soldier-like spirit of the age, their contest in the morning had served to inspire them with that strange kind of respect, and even cordiality, which one brave man even still (how much more at that day!) feels for another, whose courage he has proved while vindicating his own. It is like the discovery of a congenial sentiment hitherto latent; and, in a life of camps, often establishes sudden and lasting friendship in the very lap of enmity. This feeling had been ripened by their subsequent familiar intercourse, and was increased on Adrian's side by the feeling, that in convincing Montreal of the policy of withdrawing from the Roman territories, he had obtained an advantage that well repaid whatever danger and delay he had undergone.

The sigh, and the altered manner of Montreal,

did not escape Adrian, and he naturally connected it with something relating to her, whose music had been its evident cause.

“Yon lovely dame,” said he gently, “touches the lute with an exquisite and fairy hand, and that plaintive air seems to my ear as of the minstrelsy of Provençé.”

“It is the air I taught her,” said Montreal sadly, “married as it is to indifferent words, with which I first wooed a heart that should never have given itself to me! Ay, young Colonna, many a night, has my boat moored beneath the starlit Sorgia that washes her proud father’s halls, and my voice woke the stillness of the waving sedges with a soldier’s serenade. Sweet memories! bitter fruit!”

“Why bitter? ye love each other still.”

“But I am vowed to celibacy, and Adeline de Courval is leman where she should be wedded dame. Methinks I fret at that thought even more than she,—Dear Adeline!”

“Your lady, as all would guess, is then nobly born?”

“She is,” answered Montreal, with a deep

and evident feeling which, save in love, rarely, if ever, crossed his hardy breast. "She is! our tale is a brief one :—we loved each other as children: Her family was wealthier than mine: We were separated. I was given to understand that she abandoned me. I despaired, and in despair I took the Cross of St. John. Chance threw us again together. I learnt that her love was undecayed. Poor child!—she was even then, sir, but a child! I wild—reckless—and not unskilled, perhaps, in the arts that woo and win. She could not resist my suit or her own affection!—We fled. In those words you see the thread of my after history. My sword and my Adeline were all my fortune. Society frowned on us. The Church threatened my soul. The Grand Master my life. I became a knight of fortune. Fate and my right hand favoured me. I have made those who scorned me, tremble at my name. That name shall yet blaze, a star or a meteor, in the front of troubled nations, and I may yet win by force from the Pontiff, the dispensation refused to my prayers. On the same day, I may offer Adeline the diadem and

the ring.—Eno' of this;—you marked Adeline's cheek!—Seems it not delicate? I like not that changeful flush,—and she moves languidly,—*her* step that was so blithe!"

"Change of scene and the mild south will soon restore her health," said Adrian, "and in your peculiar life she is so little brought in contact with others, especially of her own sex, that I trust she is but seldom made aware of whatever is painful in her situation. And woman's love, Montreal, as we both have learned, is a robe that wraps her from many a storm!"

"You speak kindly," returned the knight, "but you know not all our cause of grief. Adeline's father, a proud sieur, died, they said of a broken heart,—but old men die of many another disease than that! The mother, a dame who boasted her descent from princes, bore the matter more sternly than the sire; clamoured for revenge,—which was odd, for she is as religious as a Dominican, and revenge is not christian in a woman, though it is knightly in a man! —Well, my lord, we had one boy, our only child, he was Adeline's solace in my absence,—his pretty

ways were worth the world to her! She loved him so, that, but he had her eyes and looked like her when he slept, I should have been jealous! He grew up in our wild life, strong and comely; the young rogue, he would have been a brave knight! My evil stars led me to Milan, where I had business with the Visconti. One bright morning in June, our boy was stolen; verily, that June was like a December to us!"

"Stolen!—how?—by whom?"

"The first question is answered easily,—the boy was with his nurse in the court yard, the idle wench left him for but a minute or two, so she avers, to fetch him some childish toy; when she returned he was gone, not a trace left, save his pretty cap with the plume in it! Poor Adeline, many a time have I found her kissing that relic till it was wet with tears!"

"A strange fortune in truth. But what interest could —"

"I will tell you," interrupted Montreal, "the only conjecture I could form;—Adeline's mother on learning we had a son, sent to Adeline a letter, that well nigh broke her heart, reproaching her

for her love to me, and so forth, as if that had made her the vilest of the sex. She bade her take compassion on her child, and not bring him up to a robber's life,—so was she pleased to style the bold career of Walter de Montreal. She offered to rear the child in her own dull halls, and fit him, no doubt, for a shaven pate, and a monk's cowl. She chafed much that a mother would not part with her treasure! She alone, partly in revenge, partly in silly compassion for Adeline's child, partly, it may be, from some pious fanaticism, could, it so seemed to me, have robbed us of our boy. On inquiry, I learned from the nurse—who, but that she was of the same sex as Adeline, should have tasted my dagger,—that in their walks, a woman of advanced years, but seemingly of humble rank, (that might be disguise!) had often stopped, and caressed and admired the child. I repaired at once to France, sought the old castle of de Courval;—it had passed to the next heir, and the old widow was gone, none knew whither, but it was conjectured to take the veil in some remote convent."

" And you never saw her since?"

"Yes, at Rome," answered Montreal, turning pale; "when last there I chanced suddenly upon her; and then at length I learnt my boy's fate, and the truth of my own surmise; she confessed to the theft—and my child was dead! I have not dared to tell Adeline of this; it seems to me as if it would be like plucking the shaft from the wounded side—and she would die at once, bereft of the uncertainty that rankles within her. She has still a hope—it comforts her; though my heart bleeds when I think on its vanity. Let this pass, my Colonna."

And Montreal started to his feet as if he strove, by a strong effort, to shake off the weakness that had crept over him in his narration.

"Think no more of it. Life is short—its thorns are many—let us not neglect any of its flowers. This is piety and wisdom too; nature that meant me to struggle and to toil, gave me, happily, the sanguine heart and the elastic soul of France; and I have lived long enough to own that to die young is not an evil. Come, Lord Adrian, let us join my lady ere you part, if part you must; the moon will be up soon, and

Fondi is but a short journey hence. You know that though I admire not your Petrarch, you with more courtesy laud our Provençal ballads, and you must hear Adeline sing one that you may prize them the more. The race of the troubadours is dead, but the minstrelsy survives the minstrel!"

Adrian, who scarce knew what comfort to administer to the affliction of his companion, was somewhat relieved by the change in his mood, though his more grave and sensitive nature was a little startled at its suddenness. But, as we have before seen, Montreal's spirit (and this made perhaps its fascination) was as a varying and changeful sky, the gayest sunshine and the fiercest storm swept over it in rapid alternation; and elements of singular might and grandeur, which properly directed and concentrated, would have made him the blessing and glory of his time, were wielded with a boyish levity, roused into war and desolation, or lulled into repose and smoothness with all the suddenness of chance, and all the fickleness of caprice.

Sauntering down to the beach, the music of Adeline's lute sounded more distinctly in their ears, and involuntarily they hushed their steps upon the rich and odorous turf, as in a voice, though not powerful, marvellously sweet and clear, and well adapted to the simple fashion of the words and melody, she sang the following stanzas:—

LAY OF THE LADY OF PROVENCE.

1

Ah, why art thou sad, my heart ? Why
Darksome and lonely ?
Frowns the face of the happy sky
Over thee only.

Ah me, ah me !
Render to joy the earth !
Grief shuns, not envies, Mirth ;
But leave one quiet spot,
Where Mirth may enter not,
To sigh ah me !—
Ah me !

2

As a bird, though the sky be clear,

Feels the storm lower ;

My soul bodes the tempest near

In the sunny hour ;

Ah me, ah me !

Be glad while yet we may !

I bid thee, my heart, be gay ;

And still, I know not why,—

Thou answerest with a sigh

(Fond heart !) ah me !—

Ah me !

3

As this twilight o'er the skies,

Doubt brings the sorrow ;

Who knows when the daylight dies,

What waits the morrow ?

Ah me, ah me !

Be blithe, be blithe, my lute,

Thy strings will soon be mute ;

Be blithe—hark ! while it dies,

The note forewarning, sighs

Its last—Ah me !—

Ah me !

"My own Adeline—my sweetest night-bird," half-whispered Montreal, and softly approaching, he threw himself at his lady's feet—"thy song is too sad for this golden eve."

"No sound ever went to the heart," said Adrian, "whose arrow was not feathered by sadness. True sentiment, Montreal, is twin with melancholy though not with gloom."

The lady looked softly and approvingly up at Adrian's face; she was pleased with its expression; she was pleased yet more with words of which women more than men would acknowledge the truth. Adrian returned the look with one of deep and eloquent sympathy and respect; in fact, the short story he had heard from Montreal had interested him deeply in her; and never to the brilliant queen, to whose court he was bound, did his manner wear so chivalric and earnest a homage as it did to that lone and ill-fated lady on the twilight shores of Terracina.

Adeline blushed slightly and sighed; and then, to break the awkwardness of a pause which had stolen over them, as Montreal unheeding the last remark of Adrian, was tuning the strings

of the lute, she said—“ Of course the Signor di Castello shares the universal enthusiasm for Petrarch ? ”

“ Ay,” cried Montreal ; “ my lady is Petrarch-mad, like the rest of them ; but all I know is, that never did belted knight and honest lover woo in such fantastic and tortured strains.”

“ In Italy,” answered Adrian, “ common language is exaggeration ;—but even your own troubadour poetry might tell you that love, ever seeking a new language of its own, cannot but often run into what to all but lovers seems distortion and conceit.”

“ Come, dear Signor,” said Montreal, placing the lute in Adrian’s hands, “ Let Adeline be the umpire between us, which music—your’s or mine —can woo the blander.”

“ Ah,” said Adrian, laughing ; “ I fear me, sir knight, you have already bribed the umpire.”

Montreal’s eyes and Adeline’s met ; and in that gaze Adeline forgot all her sorrows.

With a practised and skilful hand, Adrian touched the strings ; and selecting a song which was

less elaborate than those mostly in vogue amongst his country, though still conceived in the Italian spirit, and in accordance with the sentiment he had previously expressed to Adeline, he sang as follows :—

LOVE'S EXCUSE FOR SADNESS.

Chide not, belov'd, if oft with thee
I feel not rapture wholly ;
For aye, the heart that's fill'd with love,
Runs o'er in melancholy.
To streams that glide in noon, the shade
From Summer skies is given ;
So, if my breast reflects the cloud,
'Tis but the cloud of Heaven !
Thine image glass'd within my soul,
So well the mirror keepeth ;
That, chide me not, if with the light
The shadow also sleepeth.

“ And now,” said Adrian, as he concluded, “ the lute is to you : I but prelude your prize.”

The Provençal laughed, and shook his head—
“ With any other umpire, I had had my lute

broken on my own head, for my conceit in provoking such a rival ; but I must not shrink from a contest I have myself provoked, even though in one day *twice* defeated ;" and with that, in a deep and exquisitely melodious voice, which wanted only more scientific culture to have challenged any competition, the Knight of St. John poured forth

THE LAY OF THE TROUBADOUR.

1

Gentle river, the moonbeam is hush'd on thy tide,
On thy pathway of light to my lady I glide.
My boat, where the stream laves the castle, I moor,—
All at rest save the maid and her young Troubadour !

As the stars to the waters that bore
My bark, to my spirit thou art ;
Heaving yet, see it bound to the shore,
So moor'd to thy beauty my heart,—

Bel' amie, bel' amie, bel amie !

2

Wilt thou fly from the world ? it hath wealth for the vain ;
But Love breaks his bond when there's gold in the
chain ;

Wilt thou fly from the world ? It hath courts for the
proud ;—

But Love, born in caves, pines to death in the crowd.

Were this bosom thy world, dearest one

Thy world could not fail to be bright ;

For thou should'st thyself be its sun,

And what spot could be dim in thy light—

Bel' amie, bel' amie, bel' amie ?

3

The rich and the great woo thee, dearest ; and poor,
Though his fathers were princes, thy young Trou-
badour,

But his heart never quail'd save to thee, his ador'd,

There's no guile in his lute, and no stain on his sword.

Ah, I reck not what sorrows I know,

Could I still on thy solace confide ;

And I care not, though earth be my foe,

If thy soft heart is found by my side,—

Bel' amie, bel' amie, bel' amie !

4

The maiden she blush'd, and the maiden she sigh'd,

Not a cloud in the sky, not a gale on the tide ;

But though tempest had rag'd on the wave and the wind,

That castle, methinks, had been still left behind !

Sweet lily, though bow'd by the blast,
(To this bosom transplanted) since then,
Would'st thou change, could we call up the past,
To the rock from thy garden again—
Bel' amie, bel' amie, bel' amie?

Thus they alternated the time with converse and song, as the wooded hills threw their sharp, long shadows over the sea; while from many a mound of waking flowers, and many a copse of citron and orange, relieved by the dark and solemn aloe, stole the summer breeze, laden with mingled odours; and, over the seas, coloured by the slow-fading hues of purple and rose, that the sun had long bequeathed to the twilight, flitted the gay fire-flies that sparkle along that enchanted coast. At length, rising above the dark forest-steeps, the moon slowly rose, gleaming on the gay pavilion and glittering pennant of Montreal,—on the verdant sward,—the polished mail of the soldiers, stretched on the grass in various groupes, half-shaded by oaks and cypress, and the war-steeds grazing peaceably together—a wild mixture of the Pastoral and the Iron time.

Adrian, reluctantly reminded of his journey, rose to depart.

"I fear," said he to Adeline, "that I have already detained you too late in the night air; but selfishness is little considerate."

"Nay, you see we are prudent," said Adeline, pointing to Montreal's mantle, which his provident hand had long since drawn around her form; "but if you must part, farewell, and success attend you!"

"We may meet again, I trust," said Adrian.

Adeline sighed gently; and the Colonna, gazing on her face by the moonlight, to which it was slightly raised, was painfully struck by its almost transparent delicacy. Moved by his compassion, ere he mounted his steed, he drew Montreal aside,—"Forgive me if I seem presumptuous," said he; "but to one so noble this wild life is scarce a fitting career. I know that, in our time, War consecrates all his children; but surely a settled rank in the court of the emperor, or an honourable reconciliation with your knightly brethren, were better——"

"Than a Tartar camp, and a brigand's castle," interrupted Montreal, with some impatience.

“ This you were about to say ;—you are mistaken. Society thrust me from her bosom ; let society take the fruit it hath sown. ‘ A fixed rank,’ say you ? some subaltern office, to fight at other men’s command ! You know me not : Walter de Montreal was not formed to obey. War when I will, and rest when I list, is the motto of my escutcheon. Ambition proffers me rewards you wot not of ; and I am of the mould as of the race of those whose swords have conquered thrones. For the rest, your news of the alliance of Louis of Hungary with your Tribune makes it necessary for the friend of Louis to withdraw from all feud with Rome. Ere the week expire, the owl and the bat may seek refuge in yon grey turrets.”

“ But your lady ?”

“ Is inured to change.—God help her, and temper the rough wind to the lamb !”

“ Enough, sir knight ; but should you desire a sure refuge at Rome for one so gentle and so high-born, by the right hand of a knight, I promise a safe roof and an honoured home to the lady Adeline.”

Montreal pressed the offered hand to his heart ; then plucking his own hastily away, drew it across

his eyes, and joined Adeline, in a silence that showed he dared not trust himself to speak. In a few moments Adrian and his train were on the march ; but still the young Colonna turned back, to gaze once more on his wild host and that lovely lady, as they themselves lingered on the moonlit sward, and the sea rippled mournfully on his ear.

It was not many months after that date, that the name of Frà Moreale scattered terror and dismay throughout the fair Campania. The right hand of the Hungarian king, in his invasion of Naples, he was chosen afterwards vicar (or vice-gerent) of Louis in Aversa ; and fame and fate seemed to lead him triumphantly along that ambitious career which he had elected, whether bounded by the scaffold or the throne.

B O O K I V.

THE TRIUMPH AND THE POMP.

“Allora fama e paura di si buono reggimento, passa in ogni terra.”

Vit. di Cola di Rienzi, lib. 1, cap. xxi.

B O O K I V.

CHAP. I.

THE BOY ANGELO—THE DREAM OF NINA FULFILLED.

THE thread of my story transports us back to Rome. It was in a small chamber, in a ruinous mansion by the base of Mount Aventine, that a young boy sate, one evening, with a woman of a tall and stately form, but somewhat bowed both by infirmity and years. The boy was of a fair and comely presence ; and there was that in his bold, frank, undaunted carriage, which made him appear older than he was.

The old woman, seated in the recess of the deep window, was apparently occupied with a Bible that lay open on her knees ; but ever and anon

she lifted her eyes, and gazed on her young companion with a sad and anxious expression.

“Dame,” said the boy, who was busily employed in hewing out a sword of wood, “I would you had seen the show to-day. Why, every day is a show at Rome now! It is show enough to see the Tribune himself on his white steed—(oh, it is so beautiful!)—with his white robes all studded with jewels. But to-day, as I have just been telling you, the lady Nina took notice of me, as I stood on the stairs of the Capitol: you know, dame, I had donned my best blue velvet doublet.”

“And she called you a fair boy, and asked if you would be her little page; and this has turned thy brain, silly urchin that thou art——”

“But the words are the least: if you saw the lady Nina, you would own that a smile from her might turn the wisest head in Italy. Oh, how I should like to serve the Tribune! All the lads of my age are mad for him. How they will stare, and envy me at school to-morrow! You know too, dame, that though I was not always brought up at Rome, I am Roman. Every Roman loves Rienzi.”

"Ay, for the hour: the cry will soon change.
This vanity of thine, Angelo, vexes my old heart.
I would thou wert humbler."

"Bastards have their own name to win," said the boy, colouring deeply. "They twit me in the teeth, because I cannot say who my father and mother were."

"They need not," returned the dame, hastily.
"Thou comest of noble blood and long descent,
though, as I have told thee often, I know not the
exact names of thy parents; but what art thou
shaping that tough sapling of oak into?"

"A sword, dame, to assist the Tribune against
the robbers."

"Alas! I fear me, like all those who seek
power in Italy, he is more likely to enlist robbers
than to assail them."

"Why, la you there, you live so shut up, that
you know and hear nothing, or you would have
learned that even that fiercest of all the robbers, Frà
Moreale, has at length yielded to the Tribune, and
fled from his castle, like a rat from a falling
house."

"How, how!" cried the dame; "what say you?

Has this plebeian, whom you call the Tribune—has he boldly thrown the gage to that dread warrior? and has Montreal left the Roman territory?"

"Ay, it is the talk of the town. But Moreale seems as much a bugbear to you as to e'er a mother in Rome. Did he ever wrong you, dame?"

"Yes!" exclaimed the old woman, with so abrupt a fierceness, that even that hardy boy was startled.

"I wish I could meet him, then," said he, after a pause, as he flourished his mimic weapon.

"Now Heaven forbid! He is a man ever to be shunned by thee, whether for peace or war. Say again this good Tribune holds no terms with the Free Lances."

"Say it again—why all Rome knows it."

"He is pious too, I have heard; and they do bruise it that he sees visions, and is comforted from above," said the woman, speaking to herself. Then turning to Angelo, she continued—"Thou wouldst like greatly to accept the Lady Nina's proffer?"

"Ah, that I should, dame, if you could spare me."

"Child," replied the matron, solemnly, "my sand is nearly run, and my wish is to see thee with one who will nurture thy young years, and save thee from a life of license. That done, I may fulfil my vow, and devote the desolate remnant of my years to God. I will think more of this, my child. Not under such a plebeian's roof shouldst thou have lodged, nor from a stranger's board been fed: but at Rome—my last relative worthy of the trust is dead;—and at the worst, obscure honesty is better than gaudy crime. Thy spirit troubles me already. Back, my child; I must to my closet, and watch and pray."

Thus saying, the old woman, repelling the advance, and silencing the muttered and confused words, of the boy—half affectionate as they were, yet half tetchy and wayward—glided from the chamber.

The boy looked abstractedly at the closing door, and then said to himself—"The dame is always talking riddles: I wonder if she know more of me

than she tells, or if she is any way akin to me. I hope not, for I don't love her much ; nor, for that matter, anything else. I wish she would place me with the Tribune's lady, and then we'll see which of the lads will call Angelo Villani bastard."

With that, the boy fell to work again at his sword with redoubled vigour. In fact, the cold manner of this female, his sole nurse, companion, substitute for parent, had repelled his affections without subduing his temper ; and though not originally of evil disposition, Angelo Villani was already insolent, cunning, and revengeful ; but not without, on the other hand, a quick susceptibility to kindness as to affront, a natural acuteness of talent, and a great indifference to fear. Brought up in quiet affluence rather than luxury, and living much with his protector, whom he knew but by the name of Ursula, his bearing was graceful and his air that of the well-born. And it was his carriage, perhaps, rather than his countenance, which though handsome was more distinguished for intelligence than beauty, which had attracted the notice of the Tribune's bride. His education, was

that of one reared for some scholastic profession. He was not only taught to read and write, but had been even instructed in the rudiments of Latin. He did not, however, incline to these studies half so fondly as to the games of his companions, or the shows or riots in the street, into all of which he managed to thrust himself, and from which he had always the happy dexterity to return safe and unscathed.

The next morning Ursula entered the young Angelo's chamber. "Wear again thy blue doublet this morning," said she; "I would have thee look thy best. Thou shalt go with me to the palace."

"What, to-day?" cried the boy joyfully, half leaping from his bed. "Dear dame Ursula, shall I really then belong to the train of the great Tribune's lady?"

"Yes; and leave the old woman to die alone. Your joy becomes you,—but ingratitude is in your blood. Ingratitude! Oh, it has burnt my heart into ashes. And your's, boy, can no longer find a fuel in the dry crumbling cinders."

Dear dame, you are always so biting. You

know you said you wished to retire into a convent, and I was too troublesome a charge for you. But you delight in rebuking me, justly or unjustly."

" My task is over," said Ursula, with a deep-drawn sigh.

The boy answered not; and the old woman retired with a heavy step, and, it may be, a heavier heart. When he joined her in their common apartment, he observed what his joy had previously blinded him to—that Ursula wore not her usual plain and sober dress. The gold chain, rarely worn then by women not of noble birth—though, not in the other sex, affected also by public functionaries and wealthy merchants—glittered upon a robe of the rich flowered stuffs of Venice, and the clasps that confined the vest at the throat and waist were adorned with jewels of no common price.

Angelo's eye was struck by the change, but he felt a more manly pride in remarking that the old lady became it well. Her air and mien were indeed those of one to whom such garments were habitual; and they seemed that day more than usually austere and stately.

She smoothed the boy's ringlets, and drew his

short mantle more gracefully over his shoulder, and then placed in his belt a poniard whose handle was richly studded, and a purse well filled with florins.

“ Learn to use both discreetly,” said she; “ and whether I live or die you will never require to wield the poniard to procure the gold.”

“ This, then,” cried Angelo, enchanted, “ is a real poniard to fight the robbers with. Ah, with this I should not fear *Frà Moreale* who wronged thee so. I trust I may yet avenge thee, though thou didst rate me so just now for ingratitude.”

“ I *am* avenged. Nourish not such thoughts, my son, they are sinful; at least I fear so. Draw to the board and eat; we will go betimes, as petitioners should do.”

An Angelo had soon finished his morning meal, and sallying with Ursula to the porch, he saw, to his surprise, four of those servitors who then usually attended persons of distinction, and who were to be hired in every city, for the convenience of strangers or the holiday ostentation of the gayer citizens.

“ How grand we are to-day,” said he, clapping his hands with an eagerness which Ursula failed

not to reprove. “ It is not for vain show,” she added, “ which true nobility can well dispense with, but that we may the more readily gain admittance to the palace. These princes of yesterday are not easy of audience to the over humble.”

“ Oh! but you are wrong this time,” said the boy. “ The Tribune gives audience to all men, the poorest as the richest. Nay, there is not a ragged boor, or a barefooted friar who does not win access to him sooner than the proudest baron. That’s why the people love him so. And he devotes one day of the week to receiving the widows and the orphans;—and you know, dame, I am an orphan.”

Ursula, already occupied with her own thoughts, did not answer, and scarcely heard, the boy; but leaning on his young arm, and preceded by the footmen to clear the way, passed slowly towards the palace of the Capitol.

A wonderful thing would it have been to a more observant eye, to note the change which two or three short months of the stern but salutary and wise rule of the Tribune had effected in the streets of Rome. You no longer beheld the gaunt and

mail-clad forms of foreign mercenaries stalking through the vistas, or grouped in lazy indolence before the embattled porches of some gloomy palace. The shops, that in many quarters had been closed for years, were again open, glittering with wares and bustling with trade. The thoroughfares, formerly either silent as death, or crossed by some affrighted and solitary passenger, with quick steps, and eyes that searched every corner,—or resounding with the roar of a pauper rabble, or the open feuds of savage nobles, now exhibited the regular and wholesome and mingled streams of civilized life, whether bound to pleasure or to commerce. Carts and waggons laden with goods which had passed in safety by the dismantled holds of the robbers of the Campagna, rattled cheerfully over the pathways. “Never, perhaps,” —to use the translation adapted from the Italian authorities, by a modern and by no means a partial historian*—“Never, perhaps, has the energy and effect of a single mind been more remarkably felt than in the sudden reformation of Rome by the Tribune Rienzi. A den of robbers was con-

* Gibbon.

verted to the discipline of a camp or convent. In this time," says the historian,* "did the woods begin to rejoice that they were no longer infested with robbers; the oxen began to plough; the pilgrims visited the sanctuaries; the roads and inns were replenished with travellers: trade, plenty, and good faith were restored in the markets; and a purse of gold might be exposed without danger in the midst of the highways."

Amidst all these evidences of comfort and security to the people—some dark and discontented countenances might be seen mingled in the crowd, and whenever one who wore the livery of the Colonna or the Orsini felt himself jostled by the throng, a fierce hand moved involuntarily to the sword belt, and a half suppressed oath was ended with an indignant sigh. Here and there too,—contrasting the redecorated, refurnished, and smiling shops—heaps of rubbish before the gate of some haughty mansion, testified the abasement of fortifications which the owner impotently resented as a sacrilege. Through such streets and such throngs did the party we accompany wend their way

* *Vita di Cola di Rienzi*, lib. 1, c. x.

till they found themselves amidst crowds assembled before the entrance of the Capitol. The officers there stationed, kept, however, so discreet and dexterous an order, that they were not long detained, and now in the broad place or court of that memorable building, they saw the open doors of the great justice hall, guarded but by a single sentinel, and in which for six hours daily did the Tribune hold his court, for “patient to hear, swift to redress, inexorable to punish, his tribunal was always accessible to the poor and stranger.”*

Not, however, to that hall did the party bend its way, but to the entrance which admitted to the private apartments of the palace. And here the pomp, the gaud, the more than regal magnificence of the residence of the Tribune, strongly contrasted the patriarchal simplicity which marked his justice court.

Even Ursula, not unaccustomed, of yore, to the luxurious state of Italian and French principalities, seemed roused into surprise, at the hall crowded with retainers in costly liveries, the marble and gilded columns wreathed with flowers, and the

* Gibbon.

gorgeous banners wrought with the blended arms of the Republican City, and the Pontifical See, which blazed aloft and around.

Scarce knowing whom to address in such an assemblage, Ursula was relieved from her perplexity by an officer attired in a suit of crimson and gold, who, with a grave and formal decorum, which indeed reigned throughout the whole retinue, demanded respectfully whom she sought? “The Signora Nina!” replied Ursula, drawing up her stately person, with a natural, though somewhat antiquated, dignity. There was something foreign in the accent which induced the officer’s answer.

“To day, madam, I fear that the signora receives only the Roman ladies. To-morrow, is that appointed for all foreign dames of distinction.”

Ursula, with a slight impatience of tone, replied,

“ My business is of that nature which is welcome on any day, at palaces. I come, signor, to lay certain presents at the signora’s feet, which I trust she will deign to accept.”

“ And say, signor,” added the boy abruptly, “that Angelo Villani, whom the lady Nina

honoured yesterday with her notice, is no stranger but a Roman, and comes, as she bade him, to proffer to the signora his homage and devotion."

The grave officer could not refrain a smile at the pert, yet not ungraceful, boldness of the boy.

"I remember me, master Angelo Villani," he replied, "that the lady Nina spoke to you by the great staircase. Madam, I will do your errand. Please to follow me to an apartment more fitting your sex and seeming."

With that the officer led the way across the hall to a broad staircase of white marble, along the centre of which were laid those rich eastern carpets, which at that day, when rushes strewed the chambers of an English monarch, were already common to the greater luxury of Italian palaces. Opening a door at the first flight, he ushered Ursula and her young charge into a lofty anti-chamber, hung with arras of wrought velvets, while over the opposite door, through which the officer now vanished, were blazoned the armorial bearings which the Tribune so constantly introduced in all his pomp, not more from the love of shew, than from his politic desire to mingle with

the keys of the Pontiff—the heraldic insignia of the Republic.

“ Philip of Valois is not housed like this man!” muttered Ursula.—“ I shall have done (if this last) better for my charge than I recked of.”

The officer soon returned, and led them across an apartment of vast extent, which was indeed the great reception chamber of the palace. Four-and-twenty columns of the oriental alabaster which had attested the spoils of the later emperors, and had been disinterred from forgotten ruins to grace the palace of the Reviver of the old Republic, supported the light roof, which, half gothic, half classic, in its architecture, was inlaid with gilded and purple mosaics. The tessellated floor was covered in the centre with cloth of gold, the walls were clothed at intervals, with the same gorgeous hangings, relieved by pannels freshly painted in the most glowing colours, with mystic and symbolical designs. At the upper end of this royal chamber, two steps ascended to the place of the Tribune’s throne, above which was the canopy wrought with the eternal armorial bearings of the Pontiff and the City.

Traversing this apartment, the officer opened the door at its extremity, which admitted to a small chamber crowded with pages in rich dresses of silver and blue velvet. There were few amongst them elder than Angelo, and from their general beauty seemed the very flower and blossom of the city.

Short time had Angelo to gaze on his comrades that were to be:—another minute, and he and his protectress were in the presence of the Tribune's bride.

The chamber was not large—but it was large enough to prove that the beautiful daughter of Raselli, had realised her imaginative charm of vanity and splendour.

It was an apartment that mocked description—it seemed a cabinet for the gems of the world. The day-light, shaded by high and deep-set casements of stained glass—streamed in a purpling and mellow hue, over all that the art of that day boasted most precious, or regal luxury held most dear. The candelabras of the silver workmanship of Florence, the carpets, and stuffs of the East, the draperies of Venice and Genoa; paintings like the illuminated missals, wrought in gold and those

lost colours of blue and crimson,—antique marbles which spoke of the bright days of Athens ; tables of disinterred mosaics, their freshness preserved as by magic—censers of gold that streamed with the odours of Araby, yet so subdued as not to deaden the healthier scent of flowers, which blushed in every corner from their marble and alabaster vases ; a small miniature and spirit-like fountain, which seemed to gush from among wreaths of roses, diffusing in its diamond and fairy spray a scarce felt coolness to the air ;—all these, and such as these, it were vain work to detail ;—congregated in the richest luxuriance, harmonized with the most exquisite taste, uniting the ancient arts with the modern, amazed and intoxicated the sense of the beholder. It was not so much the cost, nor the luxury, that made the character of the chamber, it was a certain gorgeous and almost sublime imaginativeness,—it was rather the fabled retreat of an enchantress, an Armida, at whose word genii ransacked the earth, and fairies arranged the produce, than the grosser splendour of an earthly queen. Behind the piled cushions upon which Nina half reclined, stood four girls beautiful as

houris, with fans of the rarest feathers, and at her feet lay one older than the rest, whose lute, though now silent, attested her legitimate occupation.

But, had the room in itself seemed somewhat too fantastic and overcharged in its prodigal adornments, the form and face of Nina would at once have rendered all appropriate; so completely did she seem the natural Spirit of the Place; so wonderfully did her beauty, elated as it now was with contented love, gratified vanity, exultant hope, body forth the brightest vision that ever floated before the eyes of Tasso, when he wrought into one immortal shape, the glory of the Enchantress with the allurements of the Woman.

Nina half rose as she saw Ursula, whose sedate and mournful features involuntarily testified her surprise and admiration at a loveliness so rare and striking, but who, undazzled by the splendour around, soon recovered her wonted self-composure, and seated herself on the cushion to which Nina pointed, while the young visitor remained standing, and spell-bound by childish wonder in the centre of the apartment. Nina recognized him with a smile—

“ Ah, my pretty boy, whose quick eyes and bold air caught my fancy yesterday ! Have you come to accept my offer ? Is it you, madam, who claim this fair child ?”

“ Lady,” replied Ursula, “ my business here is brief : by a train of events, needless to weary you with narrating, this boy from his infancy fell to my charge—a weighty and anxious trust to one whose thoughts are beyond the barrier of life. I have reared him as became one of gentle blood ; for on both sides, lady, he is noble, though an orphan, motherless and sireless.”

“ Poor child ! ” said Nina, compassionately.

“ Growing now,” continued Ursula, “ oppressed by years, and desirous only to make my peace with heaven, I journied hither some months since, in the design to place the boy with a relation of mine, and that trust fulfilled, to take the vows in the City of the Apostle. Alas ! I found my kinsman dead, and a baron of wild and dissolute character was his heir. Here remaining, perplexed and anxious, it seemed to me the voice of Providence when, yester-evening, the child told me you had been pleased to honour him with your notice. Like the rest of

Rome, he has already learned to give his enthusiasm to the Tribune—his devotion to the Tribune's bride. Will you, in truth, admit him of your household? He will not dishonour your protection by his blood, nor, I trust, by his bearing."

"I would take his face for his guarantee, madam, even without so distinguished a recommendation as your own. Is he Roman? His name then must be known to me."

"Pardon me, lady," replied Ursula: "he bears the name of Angelo Villani—not that of his sire or mother. The honour of a noble house condemns his parentage ever to rest unknown. He is the offspring of a love unsanctioned by the church."

"He is the more to be loved, then, and to be pitied—victim of sin not his own!" answered Nina, with moistened eyes, as she saw the deep and burning blush that covered the boy's cheeks. "With the Tribune's reign commences a new era of nobility, when rank and knighthood shall be won by a man's own merit—not that of his ancestors. Fear not, madam: in my house he shall know no slight."

Ursula was moved from her pride by the kindness of Nina: she approached with involuntary reverence, and kissed the Signora's hand—

"May our Lady reward your noble heart!" said she; "and now my mission is ended, and my earthly goal is won. Add only, lady, to your inestimable favours one more. These jewels"—and Ursula drew from her robe a casket, touched the spring, and the lid flying back, discovered jewels of great size and the most brilliant water—"these jewels," she continued, laying the casket at Nina's feet, "once belonging to the princely house of Thoulouse, are valueless to me and mine. Suffer me to think that they are transferred to one whose queenly brow will give them a lustre it cannot borrow."

"How," said Nina, colouring very deeply, "think you, madam, my kindness can be bought? What woman's kindness ever was? Nay, nay—take back the gifts, or I shall pray you to take back your boy."

Ursula was astonished and confounded: to her experience such abstinence was a novelty, and she

scarcely knew how to meet it. Nina perceived her embarrassment with a haughty and triumphant smile, and then, regaining her former courtesy of demeanour, said, with a grave sweetness—

“The Tribune’s hands are clean,—the Tribune’s wife must not be suspected. Rather, madam, should I press upon *you* some token of exchange for the fair charge you have committed to me. Your jewels hereafter may profit the boy in his career: reserve them for one who needs them.”

“No, lady,” said Ursula, rising and lifting her eyes to heaven;—“they shall buy masses for his mother’s soul; for him I shall reserve a competence when his years require it. Lady, accept the thanks of a wretched and desolate heart. Fare you well!”

She turned to quit the room, but with so faltering and weak a step, that Nina, touched and affected, sprung up, and with her own hand guided the old woman across the room, whispering comfort and soothing to her; while, as they reached the door, the boy rushed forward, and, clasping Ursula’s robe, sobbed out—“Dear dame, not one fare-

well for your little Angelo! Forgive him all he has cost you! Now, for the first time, I feel how wayward and thankless I have been."

The old woman caught him in her arms, and kissed him passionately, when the boy, as if a thought suddenly struck him, drew forth the purse she had given him, and said in a choked and scarce articulate voice,—“And let this, dearest dame, go to masses for my poor *father’s* soul; for *he*, is dead, too, you know!”

These words seemed to freeze at once all the tenderer emotions of Ursula. She put back the boy with the same chilling and stern severity of aspect and manner which had so often before repressed him; and recovering her self-possession at once, quitted the apartment without saying another word. Nina, surprised, but still pitying her sorrow and respecting her age, followed her steps across the pages’ anti-room and the reception chamber, even to the foot of the stairs,—a condescension the haughtiest princess of Rome could not have won from her; and returning, saddened and thoughtful, she took the boy’s hand, and affectionately kissed his forehead.

"Poor boy," she said, "it seems as if Providence had made me select thee yesterday from the crowd, and thus conducted thee to thy proper refuge. For to whom should come the friendless and the orphans of Rome, but to the palace of Rome's first Magistrate." Turning then to her attendants, she gave them instructions as to the personal comforts of her new charge, which evinced that if power had ministered to her vanity, it had not steeled her heart. Angelo Villani lived to repay her *well!*

She retained the boy in her presence, and conversing with him familiarly, she was more and more pleased with his bold spirit and frank manner. The converse was however interrupted, as the day advanced, by the arrival of several ladies of the Roman nobility. And then it was that Nina's virtues receded into shade, and her faults appeared. She could not resist the woman's triumph over those arrogant signoras, who now cringed in homage where they had once slighted with disdain. She affected the manner of—she demanded the respect due to, a queen. And by many of those dexterous arts which the sex know so well,

she contrived to render her very courtesy a humiliation to her haughty guests. Her commanding beauty and her graceful intellect saved her, indeed, from the vulgar insolence of the upstart; but yet more keenly stung the pride, by forbidding to those she mortified the retaliation of contempt. Her's were the covert taunt—the smiling affront—the sarcasm in the mask of compliment—the careless exaction of respect in trifles, which it was impossible outwardly to resent, but which rankled unforgivingly within.

“ Fair day to the Signora Colonna,” said she to the proud wife of the proud Stephen; “ we passed your palace yesterday. How fair it now seems, relieved from those gloomy battlements which it must often have saddened you to gaze upon. Signora, (turning to one of the Orsini), your lord has high favour with the Tribune, who destines him to great command. His fortunes are secured, and we rejoice at it; for no man more loyally serves the state. Have you seen, fair lady of Frangipani, the last verse of Petrarch in honour of my lord? it lies yonder. May we so far venture as to request you to point its

beauties to the Signora di Savelli. We rejoice, noble lady of Malatesta, to observe that your eyesight is so well restored. The last time we met, though we stood next to you in the revels of the lady Giulia, you seemed scarce to distinguish us from the pillar by which we stood!"

"Must this insolence be endured?" whispered the Signora Frangipani to the Signora Malatesta.

"Hush, hush;—if ever it be *our* day again!"

CHAP. II.

THE BLESSING OF A COUNCILLOR WHOSE INTERESTS AND HEART ARE OUR OWN—THE STRAWS THROWN UPWARD,—DO THEY PORTEND THE STORM.

IT was later that day than usual, when Rienzi returned from his Tribunal to the apartments of the palace. As he traversed the reception hall, his countenance was much flushed; his teeth were set firmly, like a man who has taken a strong resolution from which he will not be moved; and his brow was dark with that settled and fearful frown which the describers of his personal appearance have not failed to notice as the characteristic of an anger the more deadly because invariably just. Close at his heels followed the bishop of

Orvietto, and the aged Stephen Colonna. "I tell you, my lords," said Rienzi, "that ye plead in vain. Rome knows no distinction between ranks. The law is blind to the agent—lynx-eyed to the deed."

"Yet," said Raimond hesitatingly, "bethink thee, Tribune; the nephew of two cardinals, and himself once a senator."

Rienzi halted abruptly, and faced his companions. "My lord bishop," said he, "does not this make the crime more inexcusable. Look you, thus it reads:—A vessel from Avignon to Naples, charged with the revenues of Provence to Queen Jane, on whose cause, mark you, we now hold solemn council, is wrecked at the mouth of the Tiber; with that, Martino di Porto—a noble, as you say—the holder of that fortress whence he derives his title,—doubly bound by gentle blood and by immediate neighbourhood, to succour the oppressed—falls upon the vessel with his troops (what hath the rebel with armed troops?)—and pillages the vessel like a common robber. He is apprehended—brought to my

tribunal—receives fair trial—is condemned to die. Such is the law ;—what more would ye have ? ”

“ Mercy,” said the Colonna.

Rienzi folded his arms, and laughed disdainfully. “ I never heard my lord Colonna plead for mercy when a peasant had stolen the bread that was to feed his famishing children.”

“ Between a peasant and a prince, Tribune, *I*, for one, recognise a distinction ;—the bright blood of an Orsini is not to be shed like that of a base plebeian.”

“ Which I remember me,” said Rienzi, in a low voice, “ you deemed small matter enough, when my boy-brother fell beneath the wanton spear of your proud son. Wake not that memory. I warn you, let it sleep ! —For shame, old Colonna—for shame ; so near the grave, where the worm levels all flesh, and preaching, with those grey hairs, the uncharitable distinction between man and man. Is there not distinction enough at the best ? Does not one wear purple, and the other rags ? Hath not one ease, and the other toil ? Doth not the one banquet while the other starves ? Do I

nourish any mad scheme to level the ranks which society renders an evil necessary? No. I war no more with Dives than with Lazarus. But before Man's judgment seat, as before God's, Lazarus and Dives are made equal. No more."

Colonna drew his robe round him with great haughtiness, and bit his lip in silence. Raimond interposed.

"All this is true, Tribune. But," and he drew Rienzi aside, "you know we must be politic as well as just. Nephew to two cardinals, what enmity will not this provoke at Avignon!"

"Vex not yourself, holy Raimond, I will answer it to the Pontiff." While they spoke the bell tolled heavily and loudly.

Colonna started.

"Great Tribune," said he, with a slight sneer, "deign to pause ere it be too late. I know not that I ever before bent to you a suppliant; and I ask you now to spare mine own foe. Stephen Colonna prays Cola di Rienzi to spare the life of an Orsini."

"I understand thy taunt, old lord," said Rienzi calmly, "but I resent it not. You are foe to the

Orsini, yet you plead for him—it sounds generous; but hark you,—you are more a friend to your order than a foe to your rival. You cannot bear that one great enough to have contended with you, should perish like a thief. I give full praise to such noble forgiveness ; but I am no noble, and I do not sympathize with it. One word more ;—if this were the sole act of fraud and violence that this bandit baron had committed, your prayers should plead for him ; but is not his life notorious ? Has he not been from boyhood the terror and disgrace of Rome ? How many matrons violated, merchants pillaged, robbers stilettoed in the day-light, rise in dark witness against the prisoner ? And for such a man do I live to hear an aged prince and a pope's vicar plead for mercy :—fie, fie. But I will be even with ye. The next *poor* man whom the law sentences to death, for your sake will I pardon.”

Raimond again drew aside the Tribune, while Colonna struggled to suppress his rage.

“ My friend,” said the bishop, “ the nobles will feel this as an insult to their whole order ;

the very pleading of Orsini's worst foe must convince thee of this. Martino's blood will seal their reconciliation with each other, and they will be as one man against thee."

"Be it so: with God and the People with me, I will dare, though a Roman, to be just. The bell ceases—you are already too late." So saying, Rienzi threw open the casement; and by the Staircase of the Lion rose a gibbet from which swung with a creaking sound, arrayed in his patrician robes, the yet palpitating corpse of Martino di Porto.

"Behold!" said the Tribune sternly, "thus die all robbers. For *traitors* the same law has the axe and the scaffold!"

Raimond drew back and turned pale; not so the veteran noble. Tears of wounded pride started from his eyes, he approached, leaning on his staff, to Rienzi, touched him on the shoulder and said,—

"Tribune, without treason, a judge has lived to envy his victim!"

Rienzi turned with an equal pride to the baron.—

"We forgive idle words in the aged—my lord, have you done with us, we would be alone."

"Give me thy arm, Raimond," said Stephen.— Tribune—farewell. Forget that the Colonna sued thee,—an easy task methinks, for wise as you are, you forget what every one else can remember."

"Ay, my lord, what?"

"Birth, Tribune, birth—that's all!"

"The signor Colonna has taken up my old calling and turned a wit," returned Rienzi, with an indifferent and easy tone.

Then following Raimond and Stephen with his eyes, till the door closed upon them, he muttered, "Insolent! were it not for Adrian, thy grey beard should not bear thee harmless. Birth! what Colonna would not boast himself, if he could, the grandson of an emperor?—old man, there is danger in thee, which must he watched." With that he turned musingly towards the casement, and again that grisly spectacle of death met his eye. The people below, assembled in large concourse, rejoiced at the execution of one whose whole life had been infamy and rapine—but who had seemed beyond

justice—with all the fierce clamour that marks the exultation of the rabble over a crushed foe. And where Rienzi stood, he heard their shouts of “Long live the Tribune, the just judge, Rome’s liberator!” But at that time other thoughts deafened his senses to the popular enthusiasm.

“ My poor brother!” he said, with tears in his eyes, “ it was owing to this man’s crimes—and to a crime almost similar to that for which he has now suffered—that thou wert entrained to the slaughter; and they who had no pity for the lamb, clamour for compassion to the wolf! Ah, wert thou living now, how these proud heads would bend to thee; though dead, thou wert not worthy of a thought. God rest thy gentle soul, and keep my ambition pure as it was when we walked at twilight, side by side together!”

The Tribune shut the casement, and turning away, sought the chamber of Nina. When she heard his step without, she had already risen from the couch, her eyes sparkling, her breast heaving, and as he entered, she threw herself on his neck, and murmured as she nestled to his breast,—

“Ah, the hours since we parted!”

It was a singular thing to see that proud lady, proud of her beauty, her station, her new honours;—whose gorgeous vanity was already the talk of Rome, and the reproach to Rienzi,—how suddenly and miraculously she seemed changed in his presence! Blushing and timid, all pride in herself seemed merged in her proud love for him. No woman ever loved to the full extent of the passion who did not venerate where she loved, and who did not feel humbled (delighted in that humility) by her exaggerated and overweening estimate of the superiority of the object of her worship.

And it might be the consciousness of this distinction between himself and all other created things, which continued to increase the love of the Tribune to his bride, to blind him to her failings towards others, and to indulge her in a magnificence of parade, which though to a certain point politic to assume, was carried to an extent which if it did not conspire to produce his downfall, has served the Romans with an excuse for their own cowardice and desertion, and historians with a plausible explanation of causes they had

not the industry to fathom. Rienzi returned his wife's caresses with an equal affection, and bending down to her beautiful face, the sight was sufficient to chace from his brow the emotions, whether severe or sad, which had lately darkened its broad expanse.

"Thou hast not been abroad this morning, Nina!"

"No, the heat was oppressive. But nevertheless, Cola, I have not lacked company—half the matronage of Rome has crowded the palace."

"Ah, I warrant it.—But, yon boy, is he not a new face?"

"Hush, Cola, speak to him kindly I entreat: Of his story anon. Angelo, approach. You see your new master, the Tribune of Rome."

Angelo approached with a timidity not his wont, for an air of majesty was at all times natural to Rienzi, and since his power it had naturally taken a graver and austerer aspect, which impressed those who approached him, even the ambassadors of princes, with a certain involuntary awe. The Tribune smiled at the effect he saw he had produced, and being, by temper, fond of children,

and affable to all but the great, he hastened to dispel it. He took the child affectionately in his arms, kissed him, and bade him welcome.

“ May we have a son as fair !” he whispered to Nina, who blushed, and turned away.

“ Thy name, my little friend ?”

“ Angelo Villani.”

“ A Tuscan name. There is a man of letters at Florence, doubtless writing our annals from hearsay, at this moment, so called. Is John Villani akin to thee ?”

“ I have no kin,” said the boy bluntly, “ and therefore I shall the better love the signora and honour you, if you will let me. I am Roman—all the Roman boys honour Rienzi.”

“ Do they, my brave lad ?” said the Tribune, colouring with pleasure ; “ that is a good omen of my continued prosperity.” He put down the boy, and threw himself on the cushions, while Nina placed herself on a kind of low stool beside him.

“ Let us be alone,” said he ; and Nina motioned to the attendant maidens to withdraw.

“ Take my new page with you,” said she ; “ he

is yet, perhaps, too fresh from home to enjoy the company of his giddy brethren."

When they were alone, Nina proceeded to narrate to Rienzi the adventure of the morning, but though he seemed outwardly to listen, his gaze was on vacancy, and he was evidently abstracted and self-absorbed. At length, as she concluded, he said, "Well, my beautiful, you have acted as ever, kindly and nobly. Let us to other themes. I am in danger."

"Danger!" echoed Nina, turning pale.

"Why the word must not appal you, you have a spirit like mine, that scorns fear; and for that reason, Nina, in all Rome you are my only confidant. It is not only to glad me with thy beauty, but to cheer me with thy counsel, to support me with thy valour, that Heaven gave me thee as a helpmate."

"Now our Lady bless you for those words!" said Nina, kissing the hand that hung over her shoulder; "and if I started at the word danger, it was but the woman's thought of thee,—an unworthy thought, my Cola, for glory and danger go together. And I am as ready to share the last as the

first. If the hour of trial ever come, none of thy friends shall be so faithful to thy side as this weak form but undaunted heart."

"I know it, my own Nina; I know it," said Rienzi, rising, and pacing the chamber with large and rapid strides. "Now listen to me. Thou knowest that to govern in safety, it is my policy as my pride to govern justly. To govern justly is an awful thing, when mighty barons are the culprits. Nina, for an open and audacious robbery, our court has sentenced Martin of the Orsini, the Lord of Porto, to death. His corse swings now on the Staircase of the Lion."

"A dreadful doom!" said Nina, shuddering.

"True; but by his death thousands of poor and honest men may live in peace. This is not that which troubles me: the barons resent the deed as an insult to them, that law should touch a noble. They will rise—they will rebel. I foresee the storm—not the spell to allay it."

Nina paused a moment,—"They have taken," she then said, "a solemn oath on the Eucharist not to bear arms against thee."

"Perjury is a light addition to theft and murder," answered Rienzi, with his sarcastic smile.

"But the people are faithful."

"Yes, but in a civil war (which the saints forefend!) those combatants are the staunchest who have no home but their armour, no calling but the sword. The trader will not leave his trade at the toll of a bell, every day; but the barons' soldiery are ready at all hours."

"To be strong," said Nina,—who, summoned to the councils of her lord, showed an intellect not unworthy of the honour,—"to be strong in dangerous times, authority must *seem* strong. By showing no fear, you may prevent the cause of fear."

"My own thought!" returned Rienzi, quickly. "You know that half my power with these barons is drawn from the homage rendered to me by foreign states. When from every city in Italy the ambassadors of crowned princes seek the alliance of the Tribune, they must veil their resentment at the rise of the Plebeian. On the other hand, to be strong abroad I must seem strong at home: the vast design I have planned, and, as by a miracle,

begun to execute, will fail at once if it seem abroad to be entrusted to an unsteady and fluctuating power. That design (continued Rienzi, pausing, and placing his hand on a marble bust of the young Augustus,) is greater than his, whose profound yet icy soul united Italy in subjection,—for it would unite Italy in freedom ;—yes ! could we but form one great federative league of all the States of Italy, each governed by its own laws, but united for mutual and common protection against these Attilas of the north, with Rome for their Metropolis and their Mother, this age and this brain would have wrought an enterprise which men should quote till the sound of the last trump !”

“ I know thy divine scheme,” said Nina, catching his enthusiasm ; “ and what if there be danger in attaining it, have we not mastered the greatest danger in the first step ?”

“ Right, Nina, right ! Heaven (and the Tribune, who ever recognized, in his own fortunes, the agency of the hand above, crossed himself reverently,) will preserve him to whom it hath vouchsafed such lofty visions of the future redemption of the Land of the true Church, and the liberty and

advancement of its children! This I trust: already many of the cities of Tuscany have entered into treaties for the formation of this league; nor from a single tyrant, save John di Vico, have I received aught but fair words and flattering promises. The time seems ripe for the grand stroke of all."

"And what is that?" demanded Nina, wonderingly.

"Defiance to all foreign interference. By what right does a synod of stranger princes give Rome a king in some Teuton emperor? Rome's people alone should choose Rome's governor;—and shall we cross the Alps to render the title of our master to the descendants of the Goth?"

Nina was silent: the custom of choosing the sovereign by a diet beyond the Rhine, reserving only the ceremony of his subsequent coronation for the mock assent of the Romans, however degrading to that people, and however hostile to all notions of substantial independence, was so unquestioned at that time, that Rienzi's daring suggestion left her amazed and breathless, prepared as she was for any scheme, however extravagantly bold.

“ How!” said she, after a long pause, “ do I understand aright? Can you mean defiance to the emperor ?”

“ Why, listen : at this moment there are two pretenders to the throne of Rome—to the imperial crown of Italy—a Bohemian and a Bavarian. To their election our assent—Rome’s assent—is not requisite—not asked. Can we be called free—can we boast ourselves republican—when a stranger and a barbarian is thus thrust upon our necks ? No, we will be free in reality as in name. Besides, (continued the Tribune, in a calmer tone,) this seems to me politic as well as daring. The people incessantly demand wonders from me : how can I more nobly dazzle, more virtuously win them, than by asserting their inalienable right to choose their own rulers ? The daring will awe the barons, and foreigners themselves ; it will give a startling example to all Italy ; it will be the first brand of an universal blaze. It shall be done, and with a pomp that befits the deed !”

“ Cola,” said Nina, hesitatingly, “ your eagle spirit often ascends where mine flags to follow ; yet be not over bold.”

"Nay, did you not, a moment since, preach a different doctrine? To be strong, was I not to seem strong?"

"May fate preserve you!" said Nina, with a foreboding sigh.

"Fate!" cried Rienzi, "there is *no* fate! Between the thought and the success, God is the only agent; and (he, added with a voice of deep solemnity,) I shall not be deserted. Visions by night, even while thine arms are around me; omens and impulses, stirring and divine, by day, even in the midst of the living crowd—encourage my path, and point my goal. Now, even now, a voice seems to whisper in my ear—"Pause not; tremble not; waver not;—for the eye of the All-Seeing is upon thee, and the hand of the All-Powerful shall protect!"

As Rienzi thus spoke, his face grew pale, his hair seemed to bristle, his tall and proud form trembled visibly, and presently he sunk down on a seat, and covered his face with his hands.

An awe crept over Nina, though not unaccustomed to such strange and preternatural emotions, which appeared yet the more singular in one who in

common life was so calm, stately, and self-possessed. But with every increase of prosperity and power, they seemed to increase in their fervour, as if in such increase, the devout and overwrought superstition of the Tribune recognized additional proof of a mysterious guardianship mightier than the valour or art of man.

She approached fearfully, and threw her arms around him, but without speaking.

Ere yet the Tribune had well recovered himself, a slight tap at the door was heard, and the sound seemed at once to recall his self-possession.

“Enter,” he said, lifting his face to which the wonted colour slowly returned.

An officer, half-opening the door, announced that the person he had sent for, waited his leisure.

“I come!—core of my heart,” (he whispered to Nina,) “we will sup alone to-night, and will converse more on these matters:” so saying with somewhat less than his usual loftiness of mien, he left the room, and sought his cabinet, which lay at the other side of the reception chamber. Here he found Cecco del Vecchio.

“How, my bold fellow,” said the Tribune,

assuming with wonderful ease, that air of friendly equality which he always adopted with those of the lower class, and which made a striking contrast with the majesty no less natural, which marked his manner to the great. “How now, my Cecco? Thou bearest thyself bravely, I see, during these sickly heats; we labourers, for both of us labour, Cecco, are too busy to fall ill as the idle do, in the summer, or the autumn, of Roman skies. I sent for thee, Cecco, because I would know how thy fellow craftsmen are like to take the Orsini’s execution.

“Oh! Tribune,” replied the artificer, who, now familiarized with Rienzi, had lost much of his earlier awe of him, and who regarded the Tribune’s power as partly his own creation; “they are already out of their honest wits, at your courage in punishing the great men, as you would the small.”

“So;—I am repaid! But hark you, Cecco, it will bring, perhaps, hot work upon us. Every baron will dread lest it be his turn next, and dread will make them bold, like rats in despair. We may have to fight for the Good State.”

"With all my heart, Tribune," answered Cecco gruffly. "I, for one, am no craven."

"Then keep the same spirit in all your meetings with the artificers. I fight for the people. The people at a pinch must fight with me."

"They will," replied Cecco, "they will!"

"Cecco,—This city is under the spiritual dominion of the Pontiff—so be it—it is an honour, not a burthen. But the *temporal* dominion, my friend, should be with Romans only. Is it not a disgrace to Republican Rome, that while we now speak, certain barbarians, whom we never heard of, should be deciding beyond the Alps, on the merits of two sovereigns, whom we never saw? Is not this a thing to be resisted: an Italian city,—what hath it to do with a Bohemian emperor?"

"Little eno', St. Paul knows!" said Cecco.

"Should it not be a claim questioned?"

"I think so!" replied the smith.

"And if found an outrage on our ancient laws, should it not be a claim resisted?"

"Not a doubt of it."

"Well, go to! the archives assure me that

never was emperor lawfully crowned but by the free votes of the people. *We* never chose Bohemian or Bavarian."

"But on the contrary, whenever these Northmen come hither to be crowned, we try to drive them away with stones and curses,—for we are a people, Tribune, that love our liberties."

"Go back to your friends—see—address them, say that your Tribune will demand of these pretenders to Rome the right to her throne. Let them not be mazed or startled, but support me when the occasion comes."

"I am glad of this," quoth the huge smith, "for our friends have grown a little unruly of late, and say—"

"What do they say?"

"That it is true you have expelled the banditti, and curb the barons, and administer justice fairly!"

"Is not that miracle enough for the space of some two or three short months?"

"Why, they say it would have been more than enough in a noble, but you, being raised from the

people, and having such gifts and so forth, might do yet more; it is now three weeks since they have had any new thing to talk about; but Orsini's execution to-day will cheer them a bit."

"Well, Cecco, well," said the Tribune rising, "they shall have more anon to feed their mouths with. So you think they love me not quite so well as they did some three weeks back?"

"I say not so," answered Cecco. "But we Romans are an impatient people."

"Alas, yes."

"However, they will no doubt stick close enough to you, provided, Tribune, you don't put any new tax upon them."

"Ha! But if in order to be free, it be necessary to fight—if to fight, it be necessary to have soldiers, why then the soldiers must be paid:—won't the people contribute something to their own liberties;—to just laws, and safe lives?"

"I don't know," returned the smith, scratching his head as if a little puzzled; "but I know that poor men won't be overtaxed. They say they are better off with you than with the barons

before, and therefore they love you. But men in business, Tribune, poor men with families, must look to their bellies. Only one man in ten goes to law—only one man in twenty is butchered by a baron's brigand ; but every man eats, and drinks, and feels a tax.”

“ This cannot be your reasoning, Cecco ! ” said Rienzi gravely.

“ Why, Tribune, I am an honest man, but I have a large family to rear.”

“ Enough! enough!” said the Tribune quickly ; and then he added abstractedly as to himself, but aloud,—“ Methinks we have been too lavish ; these shows and spectacles should cease.”

“ What ! ” cried Cecco ; “ what, Tribune ! — would you deny the poor fellows a holiday. They work hard enough, and their only pleasure is seeing your fine shows and processions ; and then they go home and say,—‘ See, *our* man beats all the barons ! What state he keeps ! ’ ”

“ Ah ! they blame not my splendour, then ? ”

“ Blame it ; no ! Without it they would be ashamed of you, and think the *Buono Stato* but a shabby concern.”

" You speak bluntly, Cecco, but perhaps wisely. The saints keep you. Fail not to remember what I told you!"

" No, no. It is a shame to have an emperor thrust upon us!—so it is. Good evening, Tribune."

Left alone, the Tribune remained for some time plunged in gloomy and foreboding thoughts.

" I am in the midst of a magician's spell," said he ; " if I leave off, the fiends tear me to pieces. What I have begun, that must I conclude. But this rude man shews me too well with what tools I work. For *me* failure is nothing. I have already climbed to a greatness which might render giddy many a born prince's brain. But with my fall—Rome, Italy, Peace, Justice, Civilization—all fall back into the abyss of ages!"

He rose ; and after once or twice pacing his apartment, in which from many a column gleamed upon him the marble effigies of the great of old, he opened the casement to inhale the air of the now declining day.

The Place of the Capitol was deserted save by

the tread of the single sentinel. But still, dark and fearful, hung from the tall gibbet the clay of the robber noble ; and the colossal shape of the Egyptian lion, rose hard by, sharp and dark in the breathless atmosphere.

“ Dread statue !” thought Rienzi, “ how many unwhispered and solemn rites hast thou witnessed by thy native Nile, ere the Roman’s hand transferred thee hither—the antique witness of Roman crimes ! Strange ! but when I look upon thee I feel as if thou hadst some mystic influence over my own fortunes. Beside thee was I hailed the republican lord of Rome ; beside thee are my palace—my tribunal, the place of my justice, my triumphs, and my pomp :—to thee my eyes turn from my bed of state : And if fated to die in power and peace, thou may’st be the last object my eyes will mark ! Or if myself a victim——” —he paused—shrank from the thought presented to him—turned to a recess in the chamber—drew aside a curtain which veiled a crucifix and a small table, on which lay a Bible and the monastic emblems of the scull and cross-bones—emblems, in-

deed, grave and irresistible, of the nothingness of power, and the uncertainty of life. Before these sacred monitors, whether to humble or to elevate, knelt that proud and aspiring man ; and when he rose, it was with a lighter step and more cheerful mien than he had worn that day.

CHAP. III.

THE ACTOR UNMASKED.

IN intoxication," says the proverb, "men betray their real characters." There is no less honest and truth-revealing intoxication in prosperity, than in wine. The varnish of power brings forth at once the defects and the beauties of the human portrait.

The unprecedented and almost miraculous rise of Rienzi from the rank of the Pontiff's official to the lord of Rome, would have been accompanied with a yet greater miracle, if it had not somewhat dazzled and seduced the object it elevated. When,

as in well-ordered states and tranquil times, men rise slowly, step by step, they accustom themselves to their growing fortunes. But the leap of an hour from a citizen to a prince—from the victim of oppression to the dispenser of justice—is a transition so sudden as to render dizzy the most sober brain. And, perhaps, in proportion to the imagination, the enthusiasm, the genius of the man, will the suddenness be dangerous—excite too extravagant a hope—and lead to too chimerical an ambition. The qualities that made him rise, hurry him to his fall; and victory at the Marengo of his fortunes, urges him to destruction at its Moscow.

In his greatness Rienzi did not so much acquire new qualities, as develop in brighter light and deeper shadow those which he had always exhibited. On the one hand he was just—resolute; the friend of the oppressed—the terror of the oppressor. His wonderful intellect illumined everything it touched. By rooting out abuse, and by searching examination and wise arrangement, he had trebled the revenues of the city without imposing a single new tax. Faithful to his idol of liberty, he had not been betrayed

by the wish of the people into despotic authority ; but had, as we have seen, formally revived, and established with new powers, the Parliamentary Council of the city. However extensive his own power, he referred its exercise to the people ; in their name he alone declared himself to govern, and he never executed any signal action without submitting to them its reasons, or its justification. No less faithful to his desire to restore prosperity as well as freedom to Rome, he had seized the first dazzling epoch of his power to propose that great federative league with the Italian states which would, as he rightly said, have raised Rome to the indisputable head of European nations. Under his rule trade was secure, literature was welcome, art began to rise.

On the other hand, the prosperity which made more apparent his justice, his integrity, his patriotism, his virtues, and his genius, brought out no less glaringly his arrogant consciousness of superiority, his love of display, and the wild and too daring insolence of his ambition. Though too just to avenge himself by retaliating on the patricians their own

violence, though, in his troubled and stormy tribuneship, not one unmerited or illegal execution of baron or citizen could be alleged against him, even by his enemies, yet, sharing, less excusably, the weakness of Nina, he could not deny his proud heart the pleasure of humiliating those who had ridiculed him as a buffoon, despised him as a plebeian, and who, even now, slaves to his face, were cynics behind his back. “They stood before him while he sate,” says his biographer; “all these barons, bareheaded; their hands crossed on their breasts; their looks downcast;—oh, how frightened they were!”—a picture more disgraceful to the servile cowardice of the nobles than the haughty sternness of the Tribune. It might be that he deemed it policy to break the spirit of his foes, and to awe those whom it was a vain hope to conciliate.

For his pomp there was a greater excuse: it was the custom of the age; it was the insignia and witness of power; and when the modern historian taunts him with not imitating the simplicity of an ancient tribune, the sneer betrays an ignorance of

the spirit of the age, and the vain people whom the chief magistrate was to govern. No doubt his gorgeous festivals, his solemn processions, set off and ennobled—if parade can so be ennobled—by a refined and magnificent richness of imagination, associated always with popular emblems, and designed to convey the idea of rejoicing for Liberty Restored, and to assert the state and majesty of Rome Revived—no doubt these spectacles, however otherwise judged in a more enlightened age and by closet sages, served greatly to augment the importance of the Tribune abroad, and to dazzle the pride of a fickle and ostentatious populace. And taste grew refined, luxury called labour into requisition, and foreigners from all states were attracted by the splendour of a court over which presided, under republican names, two sovereigns,* young and brilliant, the one renowned

* Rienzi, speaking in one of his letters of his great enterprise, refers it to the ardour of youth. The exact date of his birth is unknown; but he was certainly a young man at the time now referred to. His portrait in the Museo Barberino, from which his description has been already taken in the first volume of this work, represents him as beardless, and, as far

for his genius, the other eminent for her beauty. It was, indeed, a dazzling and royal dream in the long night of Rome, spoiled of her pontiff and his voluptuous train—that holiday reign of Cola di Rienzi! And often afterwards it was recalled, with a sigh not only by the poor for its justice, the merchant for its security, but the gallant for its splendour, and the poet for its ideal and intellectual grace!

As if to shew that it was not to gratify the more vulgar appetite and desire, in the midst of all his pomp, when the board groaned with the delicacies of every clime, when the wine most freely circled, the Tribune himself preserved a temperate and even rigid abstinence.* While the apartments of state

as one can judge, somewhere above thirty—old enough, to be sure, to have a beard; and seven years afterwards he wore a long one, which greatly displeased his naive biographer, who seems to consider it a sort of crime. The head is very remarkable for its stern beauty, and little, if at all, inferior to that of Napoleon, to which, as I before remarked, it has some resemblance in expression, if not in feature.

* *Vita di Cola di Rienzi* —The biographer praises the abstinence of the *Tribune*.

and the chamber of his bride were adorned with a profuse luxury and cost, to his own private rooms he transported precisely the same furniture which had been familiar to him in his obscurer life. The books, the busts, the reliefs, the arms which had inspired him heretofore with the visions of the past, were endeared by associations which he did not care to forego.

But that which constituted the most singular feature of his character, and which still wraps all around him in a certain mystery, was his religious enthusiasm. The daring but wild doctrines of Arnold of Brescia, who several years anterior had preached reform, but inculcated mysticism, still lingered in Rome, and had in earlier youth deeply coloured the mind of Rienzi; and as I have before observed, his youthful propensity to dreamy thought, the melancholy death of his brother, his own various but successful fortunes, had all contributed to nurse the more zealous and solemn aspirations of this remarkable man. Like Arnold of Brescia, his faith bore a strong resemblance to the intense fanaticism of our own puritans of the Civil War, as if similar political circumstances

conduced to similar religious sentiments. He believed himself inspired by awful and mighty commune with beings of the better world. Saints and angels ministered to his dreams; and without this, the more profound and hallowed enthusiasm, he might never have been sufficiently emboldened by mere human patriotism, to his unprecedented enterprise: it was the secret of much of his greatness,—much of his errors. Like all men who are thus self-deluded by a vain but not inglorious superstition, united with, and coloured by, earthly ambition, it is impossible to say how far he was the visionary, and how far at times he dared to be the impostor. In the ceremonies of his pageants, in the ornaments of his person, were invariably introduced mystic and figurative emblems. In times of danger he publicly professed to have been cheered and directed by divine dreams; and on many occasions the prophetic warnings he announced having been singularly verified by the event, his influence with the people was strengthened by a belief in the favour and intercourse of heaven. Thus, delusion of self might tempt and conduce to imposition on others, and he might not

scruple to avail himself of the advantage of seeming what he believed himself to be. Yet, no doubt this intoxicating credulity pushed him into extravagance unworthy of, and strangely contrasted by, his soberer intellect, and made him disproportion his vast ends to his unsteady means, by the proud fallacy, that where man failed God would interpose. Cola di Rienzi was no faultless hero of romance. In him lay, in conflicting prodigality, the richest and most opposite elements of character;—strong sense, visionary superstition, an eloquence and energy that mastered all he approached, a blind enthusiasm that mastered himself;—luxury and abstinence, sternness and susceptibility, pride to the great, humility to the low;—the most devoted patriotism and the most avid desire of personal power. As few men undertake great and desperate designs without strong animal spirits, so it may be observed, that with most who have risen to eminence over the herd, there is an aptness, at times, to a wild mirth, and an elasticity of humour which often astonish the more sober and regulated minds, that are “the commoners of life:” And the theatrical grandeur of Napoleon, the severe

dignity of Cromwell, are strangely contrasted by a frequent, nor always seasonable buffoonery, which it is hard to reconcile with the ideal of their characters, or the gloomy and portentous interest of their careers. And this, equally a trait in the temperament of Rienzi, distinguished his hours of relaxation, and contributed to that marvellous versatility with which his harder nature accommodated itself to all humours, and all men. Often from his austere judgment-seat he passed to the social board an altered man ; and even the sullen barons that reluctantly attended his feasts, forgot his public greatness in his familiar wit ; albeit this reckless humour could not always refrain from seeking its subject in the mortification of his crest-fallen foes—a pleasure it would have been wiser and more generous to forego. And perhaps it was, in part, the prompting of this sarcastic and unbridled humour that made him often love to astonish as well as to awe. But even this gaiety, if so it may be called, taking an appearance of familiar frankness, served much to ingratiate him with the lower orders, and if a fault in the prince was a virtue in the demagogue.

To these various characteristics, now fully developed, the reader must add a genius of designs so bold, of conceptions so gigantic and august, conjoined with that more minute and ordinary ability which masters details; that with a brave, noble, intelligent, devoted people to back his projects, the accession of the Tribune would have been the close of the thraldom of Italy, and the abrupt limit of the dark age of Europe. With such a people his faults would have been insensibly checked, his more unwholesome power have received a sufficient curb. Experience familiarizing him with power, would have gradually weaned him from extravagance in its display; and the active and masculine energy of his intellect would have found field for the more restless spirits, as his justice gave shelter to the more tranquil. Faults he had, but whether those faults or the faults of the people, were to prepare his downfall, is yet to be seen.

Meanwhile, amidst a discontented nobility, and a fickle populace, urged on by the danger of repose to the danger of enterprise; partly blinded by his outward power, partly impelled by the fear of internal weakness; at once made sanguine by

his genius and his fanaticism, and uneasy by the expectations of the crowd,—he threw himself headlong into the gulf of the rushing Time, and surrendered his lofty spirit to no other guidance than a conviction of its natural buoyancy and its heaven-directed haven.

CHAP. IV.

THE ENEMY'S CAMP.

WHILE Rienzi was preparing, in concert, perhaps, with the ambassadors of the brave Tuscan states, whose pride of country and love of liberty were well fitted to comprehend, and even share them,—his schemes for the emancipation from all foreign yoke of the Ancient Queen, and the Everlasting Garden of the World; the barons, in restless secrecy, were revolving projects for the restoration of their own power.

One morning the heads of the Savelli, the Orsini, and the Frangipani, met at the disfortified palace of Stephen Colonna. Their conference was

warm and earnest—now resolute, now wavering, in its object—as indignation or fear prevailed.

“ You have heard,” said Luca di Savelli, in his usual soft and womanly voice, “ that the Tribune has proclaimed, that, the day after to-morrow he will take the order of knighthood, and watch the night before, in the church of the Lateran : He has honoured me with a request to attend his vigil.”

“ Yes, yes, the knave. What means this new fantasy ?” said the brutal prince of the Orsini.

“ Unless it be to have the cavalier’s right to challenge a noble,” said old Colonna, “ I cannot conjecture. Will Rome never grow weary of this madman ?”

“ Rome is the more mad of the two,” said Luca di Savelli ; “ but methinks, in his wildness, the Tribune hath committed one error of which we may well avail ourselves at Avignon.”

“ Ah,” cried the old Colonna, “ that must be our game ; passive here, let us fight at Avignon !”

“ In a word then, he hath ordered that his bath shall be prepared in the holy porphyry vase in which once bathed the emperor Constantine.”

“ Profanation ! profanation !” cried Stephen,

This is enough to excuse a bull of excommunication. The Pope shall hear of it. I will despatch a courier forthwith."

" Better wait and see the ceremony," said the Savelli, " some greater folly will close the pomp, be assured."

" Hark ye, my masters," said the grim lord of the Orsini; " ye are for delay and caution; I for promptness and daring; my kinsman's blood calls aloud, and brooks no parley."

" And what do?" said the soft-voiced Savelli, " fight without soldiers, against twenty thousand infuriate Romans? not I."

Orsini sunk his voice into a meaning whisper. " In Venice," said he, " this upstart might be mastered without an army. Think you in Rome no man wears a stiletto?"

" Hush," said Stephen, who was of far nobler and better nature than his compeers, and who, justifying to himself all other resistance to the Tribune, felt his conscience rise against assassination; " this must not be, your zeal transports you."

" Besides, whom can we employ, scarce a Ger-

man left in the city; and to whisper this to a Roman were to exchange places with poor Martino —Heaven take him, for he's nearer heaven now than ever he was before," said the Savelli.

"Jest me no jests," cried the Orsini fiercely. "Jests on such a subject! By St. Francis I would, since thou lovest such wit, thou hadst it all to thyself; and, methinks, at the Tribune's board I have seen thee laugh at his rude humour as if thou didst not require a cord to choke thee."

"Better to laugh than to tremble," returned the Savelli.

"How! darest thou say I tremble?" cried the baron.

"Hush, hush," said the veteran Colonna, with impatient dignity. "We are not now in such holiday times as to quarrel amongst ourselves. Forbear, my lords."

"Your greater prudence, signor," said the sarcastic Savelli, "arises from your greater safety. Your house is about to shelter itself under the Tribune's; and, when the Lord Adrian returns from Naples, the innkeeper's son will be brother to your kinsman."

" You might spare me that taunt," said the old noble, with some emotion. " Heaven knows how bitterly I have chafed at the thought; yet I would Adrian were with us. His word goes far to moderate the Tribune, and to guide my own course, for my passion beguiles my reason; and since his departure, methinks we have been the more sullen without being the more strong. Let this pass. If my own son had wed the Tribune's sister, I would yet strike a blow for the old constitution as becomes a noble, if I but saw that the blow would not cut off my own head."

Savelli, who had been whispering apart with Rinaldo Frangipani, now said—

" Noble Prince, listen to me. You are bound by your kinsman's approaching connection, your venerable age, and your intimacy with the Pontiff, to a greater caution than we are. Leave to us the management of the enterprise, and be assured of our discretion."

A young boy, Stefanello, who afterwards succeeded to the representation of the direct line of the Colonna, and whom the reader will once again encounter ere our tale be closed, was playing by his

grandsire's knees. He looked sharply up at Savelli, and said, "My grandfather is too wise, and you are too timid. Frangipani is too yielding, and Orsini is too like a vexed bull. I wish I were a year or two older."

"And what would you do, my pretty censurer?" said the smooth Savelli, biting his smiling lip.

"Stab the Tribune with my own stiletto, and then hey for Palestrina!"

"The egg will hatch a brave serpent," quoth the Savelli; "yet why so bitter against the Tribune, my cockatrice?"

"Because he allowed an insolent mercer to arrest my uncle Agapet for debt. The debt had been owed these ten years; and though it is said that no house in Rome has owed more money than the Colonna, this is the first time I ever heard of a rascally creditor being allowed to claim his debt unless with doffed cap and bended knee. And I say that I would not live to be a baron, if such upstart insolence is to be put upon me."

"My child," said old Stephen, laughing heartily, "I see our noble order will be safe enough in your hands."

"And," continued the child, emboldened by the applause he received, "if I had time after pricking the Tribune, I would fain have a second stroke at—"

"Whom?" said the Savelli, observing the boy pause.

"My cousin Adrian. Shame on him, for dreaming to make one a wife whose birth would scarce fit her for a Colonna's leman."

"Go play, my child, go play," said the old Colonna, as he pushed the boy from him.

"Enough of this babble," cried the Orsini rudely. "Tell me, old lord, just as I entered I saw an old friend (one of your former mercenaries) —quit the palace; may I crave his errand?"

"Ah, yes; a messenger from Frà Moreale. I wrote to the knight, reproving him for his desertion on our ill-starred return from Corneto, and intimating that five hundred lances would be highly paid for just now."

"Ah," said Savelli, "and what is his answer?"

"Oh, wily and evasive: He is profuse in compliments and good wishes; but says he is under fealty to the Hungarian king, whose cause is before Rienzi's

tribunal; that he cannot desert his present standard; that he fears Rome is so evenly balanced between patricians and the people, that whichever party would permanently be uppermost must call in a Podesta; and this character alone the Provençal insinuates would suit him."

"Montreal our Podesta!" cried the Orsini.

"And why not?" said Savelli, "as good a well-born Podesta as a low-born Tribune? But I trust we may do without either. Colonna, has this messenger from Frà Moreale left the city?"

"I suppose so."

"No," said Orsini, "I met him at the gate, and knew him of old; it is Rodolf, the Saxon, (once a hireling of the Colonna,) who has made some widows among my clients in the good old day. He is a little disguised now; however I recognized and accosted him, for I thought he was one who might yet become a friend, and I bade him await me at my palace."

"You did well," said the Savelli musing, and his eyes met those of Orsini: shortly afterwards a conference in which much was said, and nothing settled, was broken up, but Luca di Savelli,

loitering at the porch prayed the Frangipani, and the other barons to adjourn to the Orsini's palace.

"The old Colonna," said he, "is well nigh in his dotage. "We shall come to a quick determination without him, and we can secure his proxy in his son."

And this was a true prophecy, for half-an-hour's consultation with Rodolf of Saxony sufficed to ripen thought into enterprise.

CHAP. V.

THE NIGHT AND ITS INCIDENTS.

WITH the following twilight Rome was summoned to the commencement of the most magnificent spectacle the imperial city had witnessed since the fall of the Cæsars. It had been a singular privilege, arrogated by the people of Rome, to confer upon their citizens the order of knighthood. Twenty years before, a Colonna and an Orsini had received this popular honour. Rienzi, who designed it as the prelude to a more important ceremony, claimed from the Romans a similar distinction. From the Capitol to the Lateran swept, in long procession, all that Rome

boasted of noble, of fair, and brave. First went horsemen without number, and from all the neighbouring parts of Italy, in apparel that well befitted the occasion. Trumpeters, and musicians of all kinds followed, and the trumpets were of silver; youths bearing the harness of the knightly war steed, wrought with gold, preceded the march of the loftiest matronage of Rome, whose love for shew, and it may be whose admiration for triumphant fame (which to women sanctions many offences,) made them forget the humbled greatness of their lords; amid them Nina and Irene, outshining all the rest; then came the Tribune and the Pontiff's vicar, surrounded by all the great Signors of the city, smothering alike resentment, revenge, and scorn, and struggling who should approach nearest to the monarch of the day. The high-hearted old Colonna alone remained aloof, following at a little distance, and in a garb studiously plain. But his age, his rank, his former renown in war and state, did not suffice to draw to his grey locks and high-born mien, a single one of the shouts that followed the meanest lord on whom the great Tribune smiled. Savelli

followed nearest to Rienzi, the most obsequious of the courtly band; immediately before the Tribune, came two men, the one bore a drawn sword, the other the *pendone*, or standard usually assigned to royalty. The Tribune himself was clothed in a long robe of white satin, whose snowy dazzle (*miri candoris*) is peculiarly dwelt on by the historian, richly decorated with gold, while on his breast were many of those mystic symbols I have before alluded to, the exact meaning of which was perhaps known only to the wearer. In his dark eye, and on that large tranquil brow, in which thought seemed to sleep, as sleeps a storm, there might be detected a mind abstracted from the pomp around; but ever and anon he roused himself, and conversed partially with Raimond or Savelli.

"This is a quaint game," said the Orsini, falling back to the old Colonna. "But it may end tragically."

"Methinks it may," said the old man, "if the Tribune overhear thee."

Orsini grew pale. "How—nay—nay even if he did, he never resents words, but professes to

laugh at our spoken rage. It was but the other day that some knave told him what one of the Annibaldi said of him, words for which a true cavalier would have drawn the speaker's life's blood, and he sent for the Annibaldi, and said, " My friend, accept this purse of gold,—court wits should be paid."

" Did Annibaldi take the gold ? "

" Why no ; the Tribune was pleased with his spirit, and made him sup with him, and Annibaldi says he never spent a merrier evening, and no longer wonders that his kinsman, Riccardo, loves the buffoon so."

Arrived now at the Lateran, Luca di Savelli, fell also back, and whispered to Orsini ; the Frangipani, and some other of the nobles exchanged meaning looks ; Rienzi entering the sacred edifice in which, according to custom, he was to pass the night watching his armour, bade the crowd farewell, and summoned them the next morning, " to hear things that might, he trusted, be acceptable to heaven and earth."

The immense multitude heard this intimation with curiosity and gladness, while those who had

been in some measure prepared by Cecco del Vecchio, hailed it as an omen of their Tribune's, unflagging resolution. The concourse dispersed with singular order and quietness; it was recorded as a remarkable fact, that none of so great a crowd of men of all parties exhibited license or indulged in quarrel. Some of the barons and cavaliers, among whom was Luca di Savelli, whose sleek urbanity and sarcastic humour found favour with the Tribune, and a few subordinate pages and attendants alone remained: And, save a single sentinel at the porch, that broad space before the Palace, the Basilica and Fount of Constantine, soon presented a silent and desolate void to the melancholy moonlight. Within the church, according to the usage of the time and rite, the descendant of the Teuton kings, received the order of the Santo Spirito. His pride or some superstition equally weak, though more excusable, led him to bathe in the porphyry vase, which an absurd legend consecrated to Constantine; and this, as Savelli predicted, cost him dear. These appointed ceremonies concluded, his arms were placed in that part of the church, within the

columns of St. John. And here his state bed was prepared.*

The attendant barons, pages, and chamberlains retired out of sight to a small side chapel in the edifice; and Rienzi was left alone. A single lamp, placed beside his bed, contended with the mournful rays of the moon, that cast through the long casements, over aisle and pillar, its “dim religious light.” The sanctity of the place, the solemnity of the hour, and the solitary silence round, were well calculated to deepen the high-wrought and earnest mood of that son of fortune. Many and high fancies swept over his mind—now of worldly aspirations, now of more august but visionary belief, till at length, wearied with his own reflections, he cast himself on the bed. It was an omen which graver history has not neglected to record, that the moment he pressed the bed, new prepared for the occasion, part of it sank under him : he himself

* In a more northern country, the eve of knighthood would have been spent without sleeping :—In Italy, the ceremony of watching the armour does not appear to have been so rigidly observed.

was affected by the accident, and sprung forth, turning pale and muttering ; but, as if ashamed of his weakness, after a moment's pause, again composed himself to rest, and drew the drapery round him.

The moon-beams grew fainter and more faint, as the time proceeded, and the sharp distinction between light and shade faded fast from the marble floor, when from behind a column at the farthest verge of the building, a strange shadow suddenly crossed the sickly light—it crept on—it moved, but without an echo,—from pillar to pillar it flitted—it rested at last behind the column nearest to the Tribune's bed—it remained stationary.

The shades gathered darker and darker round ; the stillness seemed to deepen ; the moon was gone ; and, save from the struggling ray of the lamp beside Rienzi, the blackness of night closed over the solemn and ghostly scene.

In one of the side chapels, as I have before said, which, in the many alterations the church has undergone, is probably long since destroyed, were Savelli and the few attendants retained by the Tribune. Savelli alone slept not ; he remained sit-

ting erect, breathless and listening, while the tall lights in the chapel rendered yet more impressive the rapid changes of his countenance.

"Now pray heaven," said he, "the knave miscarry not! Such an occasion may never again occur! He has a strong arm and a dexterous hand, doubtless; but the other is a powerful man. The deed once done, I care not whether the doer escape or not; if not, why we must stab him! Dead men tell no tales. At the worst, who can avenge Rienzi? There is no other Rienzi! Ourselves and the Frangipani seize the Aventine, the Colonna and the Orsini the other quarters of the city; and, without the master spirit, we may laugh at the mad populace. But if discovered ——;" and Savelli, who, fortunately for his foes, had not nerves equal to his will, covered his face and shuddered; ——"I think I hear a noise!—no—is it the wind? —tush, it must be old Vico de Scotto, turning in his shell of mail!—Silent—I like not that silence! No cry—no sound! Can the ruffian have played us false? or could he not scale the casement? It is but a child's effort;—or did the sentry spy him?"

Time past on: the first ray of daylight slowly

gleamed, when he thought he heard the door of the church close. Savelli's suspense became intolerable : he stole from the chapel, and came in sight of the Tribune's bed—all was silent.

“ Perhaps the silence of death,” said Savelli, as he crept back.

Meanwhile the Tribune, vainly endeavouring to close his eyes, was rendered yet more watchful by the uneasy position he was obliged to assume—for the part of the bed towards the pillow having given way, while the rest remained solid, he had inverted the legitimate order of lying, and drawn himself up, as he might best accommodate his limbs, towards the foot of the bed. The light of the lamp, though shaded by the draperies, was thus opposite to him. Impatient of his wakefulness, he at last thought it was this dull and flickering light which scared away the slumber, and was about to rise, to remove it farther from him, when he saw the curtain at the other end of the bed gently lifted: he remained quiet and alarmed ;—ere he could draw a second breath, a dark figure interposed between the light and the bed ; and he felt that a stroke was given towards that part of the latter, which, but for the

accident that had seemed to him ominous, would have given his breast to the knife. Rienzi waited not a second and better-directed blow: as the assassin yet stooped, groping in the uncertain light, he threw on him all the weight and power of his large and muscular frame, wrenched the stiletto from his dismayed hand, and dashing him on the bed, placed his knee on his breast.—The stiletto rose—gleamed—descended—the murtherer swerved aside, and it pierced only his right arm. The Tribune raised for a deadlier blow the revengeful blade.

The assassin thus foiled was a man used to all form and shape of danger; and he did not now lose his presence of mind—

“Hold!” said he; “if you kill me, you will die yourself. Spare me, and I will save *you*.”

“Miscreant!”

“Hush—not so loud, or you will disturb your guards, and some of them may do what I have failed to execute. Spare me, I say, and I will reveal that which were worth more than my life; but call not—speak not aloud, I warn you!”

The Tribune felt his heart stand still: in that lonely place, afar from his idolizing people—his

devoted guards—with but loathing barons, or, it might be, faithless menials, within call, might not his baffled murderer give a wholesome warning?—and those words and that doubt seemed suddenly to reverse their respective positions, and leave the conqueror still in the assassin's power.

“Thou thinkest to deceive me,” said he, but in a voice whispered and uncertain, which shewed the ruffian the advantage he had gained: “thou wouldst that I might release thee without summoning my attendants, that thou might’st a second time attempt my life.”

“Thou hast disabled my right arm, and disarmed me of my only weapon.”

“How comest thou hither?”

“By connivance.”

“Whence this attempt?”

“The dictation of others.”

“If I pardon thee——”

“Thou shalt know all!”

“Rise,” said the Tribune, releasing his prisoner, but with great caution, and still grasping his shoulder with one hand, while the other pointed the dagger at his throat, “Did my sentry

admit thee? There is but one entrance to the church, methinks."

" He did not; follow me, and I will tell thee more."

" Dog! thou hast accomplices?"

" If I have, thou hast the knife at my throat."

" Wouldest thou escape?"

" I cannot, or I would."

Rienzi looked hard, by the dull light of the lamp, at the assassin. His rugged and coarse countenance, rude garb, and barbarian speech, seemed to him proof sufficient that he was but the hireling of others; and it might be wise to brave one danger present and certain, to prevent much danger future and unforeseen. Rienzi, too, was armed, strong, active, in the prime of life;—and at the worst, there was no part of the building whence his voice would not reach those within the chapel,—if they could be depended upon.

" Shew me then thy place and means of entrance," said he; " and if I but suspect thee as we move—thou diest. Take up the lamp."

The ruffian nodded; with his left hand took up the lamp as he was ordered; and with Rienzi's

grasp on his shoulder, while the wound from his right arm dropped gore as he passed, he moved noiselessly along the church—gained the altar—to the left of which was a small room for the use or retirement of the priest. To this he made his way. Rienzi's heart misgave him a moment.

“ Beware,” he whispered, “ the least sign of fraud, and thou art the first victim !”

The assassin nodded again, and proceeded. They entered the room ; and then the Tribune's strange guide pointed to an open casement. “ Behold my entrance,” said he ; “ and, if you permit me my egress——”

“ The frog gets not out of the well so easily as he came in, friend,” returned Rienzi, smiling. “ And now, if I am not to call my guards, what am I to do with thee ?”

“ Let me go; and I will seek thee to-morrow ; and if thou payest me handsomely, and promisest not to harm limb nor life, I will put thine enemies and my employers in thy power.”

Rienzi could not refrain from a slight laugh at the proposition, but composing himself, replied—

" And what if I call my attendants, and give thee to their charge?"

" Thou givest me to those very enemies and employers; and in despair, lest I betray them, ere the day dawn they cut my throat—or thine."

" Methinks, knave, I have seen thee before."

" Thou hast. I blush not for name or country. I am Rodolf of Saxony!"

" I remember me;—servitor of Walter de Montreal. He, then, is thy instigator?"

" Roman, no! That noble knight scorns other weapon than the open sword, and his own hand slays his own foes. Your pitiful, miserable, dastard Italians, alone employ the courage, and hire the arm, of others."

Rienzi remained silent. He had released hold of his prisoner, and now stood facing him; every now and then regarding his countenance, and then relapsing into thought. At length, casting his eyes round the small chamber thus singularly tenanted, he observed a kind of closet, in which the priests' robes, and some articles used in the sacred service, were contained. It suggested at once an escape from his dilemma: he pointed to it—

“There, Rodolf of Saxony, shalt thou pass some part of this night—a small penance for thy meditated crime ; and to-morrow, as thou lookest for life, thou wilt reveal all.”

“Hark ye, Tribune,” returned the Saxon, doggedly ; “my liberty is in your power, but neither my tongue nor my life. If I consent to be caged in that hole, thou must swear on the crossed hilt of the dagger thou now holdest, that, on confession of all I know, you pardon and set me free. My employers are enough to glut your rage, an you were a tiger. If you do not swear this——”

“Ah, my modest friend !—the alternative ?”

“I brain myself against the stone wall ! Better such a death than the rack !”

“Fool, I want not revenge against such as thou. Be honest, and I swear that, twelve hours after thy confession, thou shalt stand safe and unscathed without the walls of Rome. So help me our Lord and his saints.”

“I am content!—donner and hagel, I have lived long enough to care only for my own life, and the great captain’s next to it ;—for the rest, I reckon not

if ye southerns cut each others' throats, and make all Italy one grave."

With this benevolent speech, Rodolf entered the closet; but ere Rienzi could close the door, he stepped forth again—

"Hold," said he : "this blood flows fast. Help me to bandage it, or I shall bleed to death ere my confession."

"*Per fede,*" said the Tribune, his strange humour enjoying the man's cool audacity, "but, considering the service thou wouldest have rendered me, thou art the most pleasant, forbearing, unabashed good fellow, I have seen this many a year. Give us thine own belt. I little thought my first eve of knighthood would have been so charitably spent!"

"Methinks these robes would make a better bandage," said Rodolf, pointing to the priests' gear suspended from the wall.

"Silence, knave," said the Tribune, frowning ; "no sacrilege ! yet, as thou takest such dainty care of thyself, thou shalt have mine own scarf to accommodate thee."

With that the Tribune, placing his dagger on the ground, while he cautiously guarded it with his foot, bound up the wounded limb, for which condescension Rodolf gave him short thanks; resumed his weapon and lamp; closed the door; drew over it the long, heavy bolt without; and returned to his couch, deeply and indignantly musing over the treason he had so fortunately escaped.

At the first gray streak of dawn he went out of the great door of the church, called the sentry, who was one of his own guard, and bade him privately, and now ere the world was astir, convey the prisoner to one of the private dungeons of the Capitol. "Be silent," said he: utter not a word of this to any one; be obedient, and thou shalt be promoted. This done, find out the councillor, Pandulfo di Guido, and bid him seek me here ere the crowd assemble."

He then, making the sentinel doff his heavy shoes of iron, led him across the church, resigned Rodolf to his care, saw them depart, and in a few minutes afterwards his voice was heard by the inmates of the neighbouring chapel; and he was soon surrounded by his train.

He was already standing on the floor, wrapped in a large gown lined with furs; and his piercing eye scanned carefully the face of each man that approached. Two of the barons of the Frangipani family exhibited some tokens of confusion and embarrassment, from which they speedily recovered at the frank salutation of the Tribune.

But all the art of Savelli could not prevent his features from betraying to the most indifferent eye the terror of his soul;—and, when he felt the penetrating gaze of Rienzi upon him, he trembled in every joint. Rienzi alone did not, however, seem to notice his disorder; and when Vico di Scotto, an old knight, from whose hands he received his sword, asked him how he had passed the night, he replied cheerfully—

“ Well, well—my brave friend! Over a maiden knight some good angel always watches. Signor Luca di Savelli, I fear you have slept but ill: you seem pale. No matter!—our banquet to-day will soon brighten the current of your gay blood.”

“ Blood, Tribune!” said di Scotto, who was in-

nocent of the plot: “ thou sayest blood, and lo ! on the floor are large gouts of it not yet dry.”

“ Now, out on thee, old hero, for betraying my awkwardness ! I pricked myself with my own dagger in unrobing. Thank heaven, it hath no poison in its blade !”

The Frangipani exchanged looks,—Luca di Savelli clung to a column for support,—and the rest of the attendants seemed grave and surprised.

“ Think not of it, my masters,” said Rienzi: “ it is a good omen, and a true prophecy. It implies that he who girds on his sword for the good of the state, must be ready to spill his blood for it; that am I. No more of this—a mere scratch: It gave more blood than I recked of from so slight a puncture, and saves the leech the trouble of the lancet. How brightly breaks the day! We must prepare to meet our fellow-citizens—they will be here anon. Ha, my Pandulfo—welcome!—thou, my old friend, shalt buckle on this mantle !”

And while Pandulfo was engaged in the task, the

Tribune whispered a few words in his ear, which, by the smile on his countenance, seemed to the attendants one of the familiar jests with which Rienzi distinguished his intercourse with his more confidential intimates.

CHAP. VI.

THE CELEBRATED CITATION.

THE bell of the great Lateran church sounded shrill and loud, as the mighty multitude, greater even than that of the preceding night, swept on. The appointed officers made way with difficulty for the barons and ambassadors, and scarcely were those nobler visitors admitted ere the crowd closed in their ranks, poured headlong into the church, and took the way to the chapel of Boniface VIII. There, filling every cranny, and blocking up the entrance, the more fortunate of the press beheld the Tribune surrounded by the splendid court his genius had collected and his

fortune had subdued. At length, as the solemn and holy music began to swell through the edifice, preluding the celebration of the mass, the Tribune stepped forth, and the hush of the music was increased by the universal and dead silence of the audience. His height, his air, his countenance were such as always command the attention of crowds ; and at this time they received every adjunct from the interest of the occasion, and that peculiar look of intent yet suppressed fervour, which is, perhaps, the sole gift of the eloquent that Nature alone can give.

“ Be it known,” said he, slowly and deliberately, “ in virtue of that authority, power, and jurisdiction, which the Roman people, in general parliament, have assigned to us, and which the Sovereign Pontiff hath confirmed, that we, not ungrateful of the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit, —whose soldier we now are—nor of the favour of the Roman people, declare, that Rome, capital of the world, and base of the Christian church ; and that every City, State and People of Italy, are henceforth free. By that freedom, and in the same consecrated authority, we proclaim, that the

election, jurisdiction, and monarchy of the Roman empire appertain to Rome and Rome's people, and the whole of Italy. We cite then and summon personally the illustrious princes, Louis Duke of Bavaria, and Charles King of Bohemia, who would style themselves Emperors of Italy, to appear before us, or the other magistrates of Rome, to plead and to prove their claim between this day and the Day of Pentecost. We cite also, and within the same term, the Duke of Saxony, the Prince of Brandenburg, and whosoever else, potentate, prince, or prelate, asserts the right of elector to the imperial throne—a right that, we find it chronicled from ancient and immemorial time, appertaineth only to the Roman people—and this in vindication of our civil liberties, without derogation of the spiritual power of the Church, the Pontiff, and the Sacred College.* Herald, pro-

* “ Il tutto senza derogare all' autorità della Chiesa, del Papa e del Sacro Collegio.”—So concludes this extraordinary citation, this bold and wonderful assertion of the classic independence of Italy, in the most feudal time of the fourteenth century. The anonymous biographer of Rienzi, declares that the Tribune cited also the Pope and the Cardinals to reside in

claim the citation, at the greater and more formal length, as written and entrusted to your hands, without the Lateran."

As Rienzi concluded this bold proclamation of the liberties of Italy, the Tuscan ambassadors, and those of some other of the free states, murmured low approbation. The ambassadors of those states that affected the party of the emperor looked at each other in silent amaze and consternation.

Rome. De Sade powerfully and incontrovertibly refutes this addition to the daring or the extravagance of Rienzi. Gibbon, however, who has rendered the rest of the citation in terms more abrupt and discourteous than he was warranted by any authority, copies the biographer's blunder, and sneers at De Sade, as using arguments "rather of decency than of weight." Without wearying the reader with all the arguments of the learned Abbé, it may be sufficient to give the first two.

1st. All the other cotemporaneous historians that have treated of this event, G. Villani, Hocsemius, the Vatican MSS. and other chroniclers, relating the citation of the emperor and electors, say nothing of that of the pope and cardinals; and the Pope (Clement VI.), in his subsequent accusations of Rienzi, while very bitter against his citation of the emperor, is wholly silent on what would have been to the Pontiff the much greater offence of citing himself and the cardinals.

The Roman barons remained with mute lips and downcast eyes; only over the aged face of Stephen Colonna settled a smile, half of scorn, half of exultation. But the great mass of the citizens were caught by words that opened so grand a prospect as the emancipation of all Italy: and their reverence of the Tribune's power and fortune, was almost that due to a supernatural being; so that they did not pause to calculate the means which were to correspond with the boast.

While his eye roved over the crowd, the gor-

2nd. The literal act of this citation, as published formally in the Lateran, is extant in Hocsemius, (whence is borrowed, though not at all its length, the speech in the text of our present tale); and in this document the Pope and his Cardinals are *not* named in the summons."

Gibbon's whole account of Rienzi is singularly superficial, inaccurate, and distorted. To his cold and sneering scepticism, allowing nothing for that sincere and urgent enthusiasm which, whether of liberty or religion, is the most common parent of daring action, the great Roman seems but an ambitious and fantastic madman. In Gibbon's hands what would Cromwell have been; what Vane, what Hampden? The pedant, Julian, with his dirty person and pompous affectation, was Gibbon's ideal of a great man.

geous assemblage near him, the devoted throng beyond;—as on his ear boomed the murmur of thousands and ten thousands, in the space without, from before the Palace of Constantine, (Palace now his own !) sworn to devote life and fortune to his cause; in the flush of prosperity that yet had known no check; in the zenith of power, as yet unconscious of reverse, the heart of the Tribune swelled proudly: visions of mighty fame and limitless dominion,—fame and dominion once his beloved Rome's, and by him to be restored,—rushed before his intoxicated gaze; and in the delirious and passionate aspirations of the moment, he turned his sword alternately to the three quarters of the then known globe, and said, in an abstracted voice, as a man in a dream, “In the right of the Roman people *this* too is mine!”*

Low though the voice, the wild boast was heard by all around as distinctly as if borne to them in thunder. And vain it were to describe the various sensations it excited; the extravagance would have moved the derision of his foes, the grief of his friends, but for the manner of the speaker, which,

* “Questo e mio.”

solemn and commanding, hushed for the moment even reason and hatred themselves in awe; afterwards remembered and repeated, void of the spell they had borrowed from the utterer, the words met the cold condemnation of the well-judging; but at that moment all things seemed possible to the hero of the people. He spoke as one inspired—they trembled and believed; and, as rapt from the spectacle, he stood a moment silent, his arm still extended—his dark dilating eye fixed upon space—his lip parted—his proud head towering and erect above the herd,—his own enthusiasm kindled that of the more humble and distant spectators; and there was a deep murmur begun by one, echoed by the rest, “The Lord is with Italy and Rienzi!”

The Tribune turned, he saw the Pope's vicar astonished, bewildered, rising to speak. His sense and foresight returned to him at once, and, resolved to drown the dangerous disavowal of the Papal authority for this hardihood, which was ready to burst from Raimond's lips, he motioned quickly to the musicians, and the solemn and ringing chaunt of the sacred ceremony, prevented the

Bishop of Orvietto all occasion of self-exoneration or reply.

The moment the ceremony was over, Rienzi touched the Bishop, and whispered, “ We will explain this to your liking. You feast with us at the Lateran.—Your arm.” Nor did he leave the good bishop’s arm, nor trust him to other companionship, until to the stormy sound of horn and trumpet, drum and cymbal, and amidst such a concourse as might have hailed on the same spot the legendary baptism of Constantine, the Tribune and his nobles entered the great gates of the Lateran, then the Palace of the World.

Thus ended that remarkable ceremony, and that proud challenge of the Northern Powers, in behalf of the Italian liberties, which, had it been afterwards successful, would have been deemed a sublime daring ; which, unsuccessful, has been construed by the vulgar into a frantic insolence ; but which, calmly considering all the circumstances that urged on the Tribune, and all the power that surrounded him, was not, perhaps, altogether so imprudent as it seemed. And, even accepting that imprudence in the extremest sense,

—by the more penetrating judge of the higher order of character, it will probably be considered as the magnificent folly of a bold nature, excited at once by position and prosperity, by religious credulities, by patriotic aspirings, by scholastic visions too suddenly transferred from the reverie to the action, beyond that wise and earthward policy which sharpens the weapon ere it casts the gauntlet.

CHAP. VII.

THE FESTIVAL.

THE Festival of that day was far the most sumptuous hitherto known. The hint of Cecco del Vecchio, which so well depicted the character of his fellow-citizens, as yet it exists, though not to such excess, in their love of holiday pomp and gorgeous show, was not lost upon Rienzi. One instance of the universal banqueting, (intended indeed rather for the people than the higher ranks,) may illustrate the more than royal profusion that prevailed. From morn till eve, streams of wine flowed like a fountain from the nostrils of the Horse in the great Equestrian sta-

tue of Constantine. The mighty halls of the Lateran palace, open to all ranks, were prodigally spread; and the games, sports, and buffooneries of the time, were in ample requisition. Apart, the Tribunessa, as Nina was rather unclassically entitled, entertained the dames of Rome; while the Tribune had so effectually silenced or conciliated Raimond, that the good Bishop shared his peculiar table—the only one admitted to that honour. As the eye ranged each saloon and hall—it beheld the space lined with all the nobility and knighthood—the wealth and strength,—the learning and the beauty—of the Italian metropolis; mingled with ambassadors and noble strangers, even from beyond the Alps;*—envoys not only of the free states that had welcomed the rise of the Tribune, but of the highborn and haughty tyrants who had first derided his arrogance, and now cringed to his power. There, were not only the ambassadors of Florence, of Sienna, (of Arezzo, which last subjected its government to the Tribune,) of Todi, of Spoleto, and of countless other lesser towns and

* The simple and credulous biographer of Rienzi declares his fame to have reached the ears of the Soldan of Babylon.

states, but of the dark and terrible Visconti, Prince of Milan, of Obizzo of Ferrara, and the tyrant rulers of Verona and Bologna; even the proud and sagacious Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, whose arm afterwards broke for awhile the power of Montreal, at the head of his Great Company, had deputed his representative in his most honoured noble. John di Vico, the worst and most malignant despot of his day, who had sternly defied the arms of the Tribune, now subdued and humbled, was there in person; and the ambassadors of Hungary and of Naples, mingled with those of Bavaria and Bohemia, whose sovereigns that day had been cited to the Roman Judgment Court. The nodding of plumes, the glitter of jewels and cloth of gold, the rustling of silks and jingle of golden spurs, the waving of banners from the roof, the sounds of minstrelsy from the galleries above, all presented a picture of such power and state—a court and chivalry of such show—as the greatest of the feudal kings might have beheld with a sparkling eye and a swelling heart. But at that moment the cause and lord of all that splendour, recovered from his late exhilaration, sat moody

and abstracted, remembering with a thoughtful brow the adventure of the past night, and sensible that amongst his gaudiest revellers lurked his intended murderers. Amidst the swell of the minstrelsy and the pomp of the crowd, he felt that treason scowled beside him; and the image of the skeleton obtruding, as of old, its grim thought of death upon the feast, darkened the ruby of the wine, and chilled the glitter of the scene.

It was while the feast was loudest that Rienzi's page was seen gliding through the banquet, and whispering several of the nobles; each bowed low, but changed colour as he received the message.

"My lord Savelli," said Orsini, himself trembling, "bear yourself more bravely. This must be meant in honour, not revenge. I suppose your summons corresponds with mine."

"He—he—asks—asks—me to supper at the Capitol; a fri—endly meeting—(pest on his friend—ship!)—after the noise of the day."

"The words addressed also to me!" said Orsini turning to one of the Frangipani.

Those who received the summons soon broke from the feast, and collected in a group, eagerly

conferring. Some were for flight, but flight was confession; their number, rank, long and consecrated impunity, reassured them, and they resolved to obey. The old Colonna, the sole innocent baron of the invited guests, was also the one who refused the invitation. “Tush!” said he peevishly; “here is feasting enough for one day! Tell the Tribune that ere he sups I hope to be asleep. Grey hairs cannot encounter all this fever of festivity.”

As Rienzi rose to depart, which he did early, for the banquet took place while yet morning, Raimond, eager to escape and to confer with some of his spiritual friends, as to the report he should make to the Pontiff, was beginning his expressions of farewell, when the merciless Tribune said to him gravely—

“ My lord, we want you on urgent business at the Capitol. A prisoner—a trial—perhaps (he added with his portentous and prophetic frown) an *execution* waits us! Come.”

“ Verily, Tribune,” stammered the good bishop, “ this is a strange time for execution!”

“ Last night was a time yet more strange.—Come.”

There was something in the way in which the final word was pronounced, that Raimond could not resist. He sighed, muttered, twitched his robes, and followed the Tribune. As he passed through the halls the company rose on all sides. Rienzi repaid their salutations with smiles and whispers of frank courtesy and winning address. Young as he yet was, and of a handsome and noble presence, that took every advantage from splendid attire, and yet more from an appearance of intellectual command in his brow and eye, which the less cultivated signors of that dark age necessarily wanted,—he glittered through the Court as one worthy to form, and fitted to preside over, it; and his supposed descent from the Teuton Emperor, which, since his greatness, was universally bruited and believed abroad, seemed undeniably visible to the foreign lords in the majesty of his mien and the easy blandness of his address.

“ My Lord Prefect,” said he to a dark and sullen personage in black velvet, the powerful and arrogant John di Vico, Prefect of Rome, “ we are rejoiced to find so noble a guest at Rome: we must repay the courtesy by surprising you in your own

palace ere long ;—nor will you, Signor (as he turned to the envoy from Tivoli), refuse us a shelter amidst your groves and waterfalls ere the vintage be gathered. Methinks Rome, united with sweet Tivoli, grows reconciled to the Muses. Your suit is carried, Master Venoni : the Council recognizes its justice ; but I reserved the news for this holiday—you do not blame me, I trust.” This was whispered, with a half-affectionate frankness, to a worthy citizen, who, finding himself amidst so many of the great, would have shrunk from the notice of the Tribune ; but it was the policy of Rienzi to pay an especial and marked attention to those engaged in commercial pursuits. As, after tarrying a moment or two with the merchant, he passed on, the tall person of the old Colonna caught his eye—

“ Signor,” said he, with a profound inclination of his head, but with a slight emphasis of tone, “ you will not fail us this evening.”

“ Tribune——” began the Colonna.

“ We receive no excuse,” interrupted the Tribune, hastily, and passed on.

He halted for a few moments at a small group

of men plainly attired, who were watching him with intense interest; for they too were scholars, and in Rienzi's rise they saw another evidence of that wonderful and sudden power which intellect had begun to assume over brute force. With these, as if abruptly mingled with congenial spirits, the Tribune relaxed all the gravity of his brow. Happier, perhaps, his living career—more unequivocal his posthumous renown—had his objects as his tastes been their's!

“Ah, *carissime!*” said he to one, whose arm he drew within his own—“and how proceeds thy interpretation of the old marbles?—half unravelled? I rejoice to hear it! Confer with me as of old, I pray thee. To-morrow—no, nor the day after, but next week—we will have a tranquil evening. Dear poet, your ode transported me to the days of Horace; yet, methinks, we do wrong to reject the vernacular for the Latin. You shake your head? Well, Petrarch thinks with you: his great epic moves with the stride of a giant—so I hear from his friend and envoy;—and here he is; My Lælius, is not that your name with Petrarch?—how shall I express my delight at his comforting—his inspir-

ing letter? Alas! he overrates not my intentions, but my power. Of this hereafter."

A slight shade darkened the Tribune's brow at these words; and moving on, a long line of nobles and princes on either side, restored him to his self-possession, and the dignity he had dropped with his former equals. Thus he passed through the crowd, and gradually disappeared.

"He bears him bravely," said one, as the revellers re-seated themselves. " Noticed you the *we*—the style royal?"

"But it must be owned that he lords it well," said the ambassador of the Visconti: "less pride would be cringing to his haughty court."

"Why," said a professor of Bologna, "why is the Tribune called proud? I see no pride in him."

"Nor I," said a wealthy jeweller.

While these, and yet more contradictory, comments followed the exit of the Tribune, he passed into the saloon, where Nina presided; and here his fair person and silver tongue (" *Suavis coloratæque sententiæ*," according to the description of Petrarch,)—won him a more general favour with

the matrons than he experienced with their lords, and not a little contrasted the formal and nervous compliments of the good bishop, who served him, on such occasions, with an excellent foil.

But as soon as these ceremonies were done, and Rienzi mounted his horse, his manner changed at once into a stern and ominous severity.

“Vicar,” said he, with great shortness, to the Bishop, “we might well need your presence. Know that at the Capitol now sits the Council in judgment upon an assassin. Last night, but for heaven’s mercy, I should have fallen a victim to a hireling’s dagger. Know you aught of this?”

And he turned so sharply on the Bishop, that the poor canonist nearly dropped from his horse in surprise and terror.

“I—I!” said he.

Rienzi smiled—“No, good my lord bishop! I see you are of no murderer’s mould;—but to continue:—that I might not appear to act in mine own cause, I ordered the prisoner to be tried in my absence. In his trial (you marked the letter brought me at our banquet)—”

“Ay, and you changed colour.”

“ Well I might : in his trial, I say, he has confessed that nine of the loftiest lords of Rome were his instigators. *They sup with me to-night!*—Vicar, forwards !”

B O O K V.

T H E C R I S I S.

“Questo ha acceso 'l fuoco e la fiamma la quale non la potrà spegnere.”

Vit. di Col. di Rienzi, lib i. cap. 29.

BOOK V.

CHAP. I.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE TRIBUNE.

THE brief words of the Tribune to Stephen Colonna, though they sharpened the rage of the proud old noble, were such as he did not on reflection, deem it prudent to disobey. Accordingly, at the appointed hour, he found himself in one of the halls of the Capitol, with a gallant party of his peers. Rienzi received them with more than his usual graciousness.

They sate down to the splendid board in secret uneasiness and alarm, as they saw that, with the exception of Stephen Colonna, none, save the conspirators, had been invited to the banquet. Rienzi, regardless of their silence and abstraction, was more than usually gay—the old Colonna more than usually sullen.

“ We fear we have but ill pleased you, my lord Colonna, by our summons. Once, methinks, we might more easily provoke you to a smile.”

“ Situations are changed, Tribune, since you were my guest.”

“ Why scarcely so. I have risen, but you have not fallen. Ye walk the streets day and night in security and peace; your lives are safe from the robber, and your palaces no longer need bars and battlements to shield you from your fellow-citizens. I have risen, but *we all* have risen—from barbarous disorder into civilized life! My lord Gianni Colonna, whom we have made Captain over Campagna, you will not refuse a cup to the Buono Stato;—nor think we mistrust your valour, when we say, that we rejoice Rome hath no enemies to attest your generalship.”

"Methinks," quoth the old Colonna bluntly, "we shall have enemies enough from Bohemia and Bavaria, ere the next harvest is green."

"And, if so," replied the Tribune calmly, "foreign foes are better than civil strife."

"Ay, if we have money in the treasury, which is but little likely, if we have many more such holidays."

"You are ungracious, my lord," said the Tribune, "and besides, you are more uncomplimentary to Rome than to ourselves. What citizen would not part with gold to buy fame and liberty?"

"I know very few in Rome that would," answered the baron. "But tell me, Tribune, you who are a notable casuist, which is the best for a state—that its governor should be over thrifty or over lavish?"

"I refer the question to my friend, Luca di Savelli," replied Rienzi. "He is a grand philosopher, and I wot well, could explain a much knottier riddle, which we will presently submit to his acumen."

The barons, who had been much embarrassed by

the bold speech of the old Colonna, all turned their eyes to Savelli, who answered with more composure than was anticipated.

“ The question admits a double reply. He who is *born* a ruler, and maintains a foreign army, governing by fear, should be penurious. He who is *made* ruler, courts the people, and would reign by love, must win their affection by generosity, and dazzle their fancies by pomp. Such I believe is the usual maxim in Italy, which is rife in all experience of state wisdom.”

The barons unanimously applauded the discreet reply of Savelli, excepting only the old Colonna.

“ Yet pardon me, Tribune, said Stephen, if I depart from the courtier-like decision of our friend, and opine, though with all due respect, that even a friar’s coarse serge,* the parade of humility would better behove thee, than this gaudy pomp, the parade of pride !” So saying, he touched the large loose sleeve fringed with gold, of the Tribune’s purple robe.

“ Hush, father!” said Gianni, Colonna’s son,

* *Vestimenta da Bizoco*, was the phrase used by Colonna; an expression hard to render literally.

colouring at the unprovoked rudeness and dangerous candour of the veteran.

“ Nay, it matters not,” said the Tribune, with affected indifference, though his lip quivered, and his eye shot fire; and then after a pause, he resumed with an awful smile, “ If the Colonna loves the serge of the friar, he may see enough of it ere we part.

And now, my lord Savelli, for my question, which I pray you listen to ; it demands all your wit. Is it best for a State’s Ruler to be over forgiving, or over just ? Take breath to answer ; you look faint—you grow pale—you tremble—you cover your face ! Traitor and assassin, your conscience betrays you ! My lords relieve your accomplice, and take up the answer.”

“ Nay, if we are discovered,” said the Orsini, rising in despair, “ we will not fall unavenged—die, tyrant !”

He rushed to the place where Rienzi stood—for the Tribune also rose,—and made a thrust at his breast with his dagger, the steel pierced the purple robe, yet glanced harmlessly away—and the Tribune regarded the baffled murderer with a scornful smile.

"Till yesternight, I never dreamt, that under the robe of state I should need the secret corselet," said he. "My lords, you have taught me a dark lesson, and I thank ye."

So saying, he clapped his hands, and suddenly the folding doors at the end of the hall flew open, and discovered the saloon of the council hung with silk of a blood-red, relieved by rays of white;—the emblem of crime and death. At a long table sate the councillors in their robes; at the bar stood a ruffian form, which the banqueters too well recognized.

"Bid Rodolf of Saxony approach!" said the Tribune.

And led by two guards, the robber entered the hall.

"Wretch, *you* then betrayed us!" said one of the Frangipani.

"Rodolf of Saxony goes ever to the highest bidder," returned the miscreant, with a horrid grin. "You gave me gold, and I would have slain your foe,—your foe defeated me. He gives me life, and life is a greater boon than gold!"

"Ye confess your crime, my lords! Silent! dumb! Where is your wit, Savelli? Where your pride, Rinaldo di Orsini? Gianni Colonna is your chivalry come to this?"

"Oh!" continued Rienzi, with deep and passionate bitterness; "oh, my lords, will nothing conciliate you—not to me, but to Rome? What hath been my sin to you and yours? Disbanded ruffians (such as your accuser)—dismantled fortresses—impartial law—what man, in all the wild revolutions of Italy, sprung from the people, ever yielded less to their license? Not a coin of your coffers touched by wanton power,—not a hair of your heads harmed by private revenge. You, Gianni Colonna, loaded with honours, entrusted with command—you, Alphonso di Frangipani, endowed with new principalities,—did the Tribune remember one insult he received from you as the Plebeian. You accuse my pride;—was it my fault that ye cringed and fawned upon my power,—flattery on your lips, poison at your hearts. No, *I* have not offended you; let the world know, that in me you aimed at liberty, justice, law, order, the restored grandeur, the renovated rights of

Rome! At these, the Abstract and the Immortal—not at this frail form, ye struck;—by the divinity of these ye are defeated;—for the outraged majesty of these,—criminals and victims,—ye must die!

With these words, uttered with the tone and air that would have become the loftiest spirit of the ancient city, Rienzi, with a majestic step, swept from the chamber into the hall of council.*

All that night, the conspirators remained within that room, the doors locked and guarded; the banquet unremoved, and its splendour strangely contrasting the mood of the guests.

The utter prostration and despair of these dastard criminals—so unlike the knightly Normans of France and England, has been painted by the historian in odious and withering colours. The old Colonna alone sustained his impetuous and imperious character. He strode to and fro'

* The guilt of the barons in their designed assassination of Rienzi, though hastily slurred over by Gibbon, and other modern writers, is clearly attested by Muratori, the Bolognese Chronicle, &c.—They even confessed the crime. (See Cron. Estens : Muratori, tom. xviii. p. 442.)

the room, like a lion in his cage, uttering loud threats of resentment and defiance ; and beating at the door with his clenched hands, demanding egress, and proclaiming the vengeance of the Pontiff.

The dawn came, slow and grey upon that agonized assembly : and just as the last star faded from the melancholy horizon, and by the wan and comfortless heaven, they regarded each other's faces, almost spectral with anxiety and fear, the great bell of the Capitol sounded the notes in which they well recognized the chime of death ! It was then that the door opened, and a drear and gloomy procession of cordeliers, one to each baron, entered the apartment ! At that spectacle, we are told, the terror of the conspirators was so great, that it froze up the very power of speech.* The greater part at length, deeming all hope over, resigned themselves to their ghostly confessors. But when the friar appointed to Stephen approached that passionate old man, he waved his hand impatiently, and said—“ Tease me not, tease me not.”

* Diventero si gelati, che non poteano favellare.

“ Nay, son, prepare for the awful hour.”

“ Son, indeed;” quoth the baron, “ I am old enough to be thy grandsire; and for the rest, tell him who sent thee, that I neither am prepared for death, nor will prepare! I have made up my mind to live these twenty years, and longer too;—if I catch not my death with the cold of this accursed night.”

Just at that moment a cry that almost seemed to rend the Capitol asunder was heard, as with one voice the multitude below yelled forth,

“ Death to the conspirators! death! death!”

While this the scene in that hall, the Tribune issued from his chamber, in which he had been closeted with his wife and sister. The noble spirit of the one, the tears and grief of the other, (who saw at one fell stroke perish the house of her betrothed,) had not worked without effect upon a temper, stern and just indeed, but naturally averse to blood; and a heart capable of the loftiest species of revenge.

He entered the council, still sitting, with a calm brow, and even a cheerful eye.

“ Pandulfo di Guido,” he said, turning to that

citizen, “you are right; you spoke as a wise man and a patriot, when you said that to cut off with one blow, however merited, the noblest heads of Rome, would endanger the state, sully our purple with an indelible stain, and unite the nobility of Italy against us.”

“ Such, Tribune, was my argument, though the council have decided otherwise.”

“ Hearken to the shouts of the populace, you cannot appease their honest wrath,” said the demagogue Baroncelli.

Many of the council murmured applause.

“ Friends,” said the Tribune, with a solemn and earnest aspect, “let not Posterity, say that liberty loves blood; let us for once adopt the great example of the mercy of our great Redeemer! We have triumphed—let us forbear; we are saved—let us forgive!”

The speech of the Tribune was supported by Pandulfo, and others of the more mild and moderate policy; and after a short but animated discussion, the influence of Rienzi prevailed, and the sentence of death was revoked, but by a small majority.

“And now,” said Rienzi, “let us be more than just, let us be generous. Speak—and boldly. Do any of ye think that I have been over hard, over haughty with these stubborn spirits?—I read your answer in your brows!—I have! Do any of ye think this error of mine may have stirred them to their dark revenge? Do any of ye deem that they partake, as we do, of human nature,—that they are sensible to kindness,—that they are softened by generosity,—that they can be tamed and disarmed by such vengeance as is dictated to noble foes by Christian laws?”

“I think,” said Pandulfo, after a pause, “that it will not be in human nature, if the men you pardon, thus offending and thus convicted, attempt again your life!”

“Methinks,” said Rienzi, we must do even more than pardon. The first great Cæsar, when he did not crush a foe, strove to convert him to a friend—”

“And perished by the attempt,” said Baroncelli, abruptly.

Rienzi started and changed colour.

“If you would save these wretched prisoners,

better not wait till the fury of the mob become ungovernable," whispered Pandulfo.

The Tribune roused himself from his reverie.

"Pandulfo," said he, in the same tone, "my heart misgives me—the brood of serpents are in my hand,—I do not strangle them—they may sting me to death, in return for my mercy—it is their instinct! No matter: It shall not be said that the Roman Tribune bought, with so many lives, his own safety: nor shall it be written upon my grave-stone, 'Here lies the coward, who did not dare forgive!' What, ho! there, officers, unclose the doors! My masters, let us acquaint the prisoners with their sentence."

With that, Rienzi seated himself on the chair of state, at the head of the table, and the sun now risen cast its rays over the blood-red walls, in which the barons, marshalled in order into the chamber, thought to read their fate.

"My lords," said the Tribune, "ye have offended the laws of God and man; but God teaches man the quality of mercy. Learn at last, that I bear a charmed life. Nor is he, whom for high purposes, Heaven hath raised from the cottage to

the popular throne, without invisible aid, and spiritual protection. If hereditary monarchs are deemed sacred, how much more one in whose power the divine hand hath writ its witness. Yes, over him who lives but for his Country, whose greatness is his country's gift, whose life is his country's liberty, watch the souls of the just, and the unsleeping eyes of the sworded seraphim! Taught by your late failure and your present peril, bid your anger against me cease; respect the laws, revere the freedom of your city, and think that no state presents a nobler spectacle than men born as ye are,—a patrician and illustrious order—using your power to protect your city, your wealth to nurture its arts, your chivalry to protect its laws! Take back your swords—and the first man who strikes against the liberties of Rome, let *him* be your victim; even though that victim be the Tribune. Your cause has been tried—your sentence is pronounced. Renew your oath to forbear all hostility, private or public, against the government and the magistrates of Rome, and ye are pardoned—ye are free!"

Amazed, bewildered, the barons mechanically

bent the knee: the friars who had received their confessions, administered the appointed oath; and while, with white lips, they muttered the solemn words, they heard below the roar of the multitude for their blood.

This ceremony ended, the Tribune passed into the banquet hall, which conducted to a balcony, whence he was accustomed to address the people; and never, perhaps, was his wonderful mastery over the passions of an audience, (*ad persuadendum efficax dictator quoque dulcis ac lepidus,**) more greatly needed or more eminently shewn, than on that day; for the fury of the people was at its height, and it was long ere he succeeded in turning it aside. Before he concluded, however, every wave of the wild sea lay hushed.—The orator lived to stand on the same spot, to plead for a nobler life than those he now saved,—and to plead unheard and in vain!

As soon as the Tribune saw the favourable moment had arrived, the barons were admitted into the balcony:—in the presence of the breathless

* Petrarch of Rienzi.

thousands, they solemnly pledged themselves to protect the Good State. And thus the morning which seemed to dawn upon their execution, witnessed their reconciliation with the people.

The crowd dispersed, the majority soothed and pleased ;—the more sagacious, vexatious and dissatisfied.

“He has but increased the smoke and the flame which he was not able to extinguish,” growled Cecco del Vecchio, and the smith’s appropriate saying passed into a proverb and a prophecy.

Meanwhile the Tribune, conscious at least that he had taken the more generous course, broke up the council, and retired to the chamber, where Nina and his sister waited him. These beautiful young women had conceived for each other the tenderest affection. And their differing characters, both of mind and feature, seemed by contrast to heighten the charms of both ; as in a skilful jewellery, the pearl and diamond borrow beauty from each other.

And as Irene now turned her pale countenance and streaming eyes from the bosom to which she

had clung for support, the timid sister, anxious, doubtful, wistful ;—the proud wife, sanguine and assured, as if never diffident of the intentions nor of the power of her Rienzi :—the contrast would have furnished to a painter no unworthy incarnation of the Love that hopeth, and the Love that feareth, all things.

“ Be cheered, my sweet sister,” said the Tribune, first caught by Irene’s imploring look, “ not a hair on the heads of those, who boast the name of him thou lovest so well, is injured.—Thank heaven,” as his sister, with a low cry, rushed into his arms, “ that it was against my life they conspired! had it been another Roman’s, mercy might have been a crime! Dearest, may Adrian love thee half as well as I; and yet, my sister and my child, none can know thy soft soul like him, who watched over it since its first blossom expanded to the sun. My poor brother! had he lived, your council had been his, and methinks his gentle spirit often whispers away the sternness which, otherwise, would harden over mine. Nina, my queen, my inspirer, my monitor,—ever thus let thy heart, masculine in my dis-

tress, be woman's in my power, and be to me, with Irene, upon earth, what my brother is in heaven!"

The Tribune, exhausted by the trials of the night retired for a few hours to rest; and as Nina, encircling him within her arms, watched over his noble countenance—care hushed, ambition laid at rest, its serenity had something almost of sublime: And tears of that delicious pride, which woman sheds for the hero of her dreams, stood heavy in the wife's eyes, as she rejoiced more, in the deep stillness of her heart, at the prerogative alone hers, of sharing his solitary hours, than in all the rank to which his destiny had raised her, and which her nature fitted her at once to adorn and to enjoy. In that calm and lonely hour, she beguiled her heart by waking dreams, vainer than the sleeper's—and pictured to herself the long career of glory, the august decline of peace, which were to await her lord.

And while she thus watched and thus dreamed, the cloud, as yet no bigger than a man's hand, darkened the horizon of a fate whose sunshine was well nigh past!

CHAP. II.

THE FLIGHT.

FRETTING his proud heart, as a steed frets on the bit, old Colonna regained his palace. To him, innocent of the proposed crime of his kin and compeers, the whole scene of the night and morning, presented but one feature of insult and degradation. Scarce was he in his palace, ere he ordered Couriers, in whom he knew he could confide, to be in preparation for his summons. "This to Avignon," said he to himself, as he concluded an epistle to the Pontiff.—"We will see whether the friendship of the great house of the Colonna, will outweigh the frantic support of the rabbles' puppet.—This to Palestrina,—the rock is inaccessible!—This to John di Vico, he may be relied upon,

traitor though he be!—This to Naples; the Colonna will disown the Tribune's ambassador, if he throw not up the trust and hasten hither, not a lover but a soldier!—And may this find Walter de Montreal! Ah, a precious messenger he sent us, but I will forgive all—all, for a thousand lances.” And as with trembling hands, he twined the silk round his letters—he bade his pages invite to his board next day, all the signors who had been implicated with him on the previous night.

The barons came—far more enraged at the disgrace of pardon, than grateful for the boon of mercy. Their fears united with their pride, and the shouts of the mob, the whine of the cordeliers, still ringing in their ears; they deemed united resistance, the only course left to protect their lives, and avenge their affront.

To them the public pardon of the Tribune, seemed only a disguise to private revenge. All they believed was, that Rienzi did not dare to destroy them in the face of day: forgetfulness and forgiveness appeared to them as the means designed to lull their vigilance, while abasing their pride: and the knowledge of crime detected,

forbade them all hope of safety. The hand of their own assassin might be armed against them, or they might be ruined singly, one by one, as was the common tyrant-craft of that day. Singularly enough, Luca di Savelli, was the most urgent for immediate rebellion. The fear of death made the coward brave.

Unable even to conceive the romantic generosity of the Tribune, the barons were yet more alarmed when, the next day, Rienzi summoning them one by one to a private audience, presented them with gifts, and bade them forget the past; excused himself rather than them, and augmented their offices and honours.

In the Quixotism of a heart to which royalty was natural, he thought that there was no medium-course—and that the enmity he would not silence by death, he could crush by confidence and favours. Such conduct from a born king to hereditary inferiors, might have been successful. But the generosity of one who has abruptly risen over his lords, is but the ostentation of insult. Rienzi in this, and perhaps in forgiveness itself, committed a fatal error of *policy*, which

the dark sagacity of a Visconti, or in later times of a Borgia, would never have perpetrated. But it was the error of a bright and a great mind.

Nina was seated in the grand saloon of the palace, it was the day of reception to the Roman ladies.

The attendance was so much less numerous than usual, that it startled her, and she thought there was a coldness and restraint in the manner of the visitors present, which somewhat stung her vanity.

“ I trust we have not offended the Signora Colonna,” she said to the lady of Gianni, Stephen’s son. “ She was wont to grace our halls, and we miss much her stately presence.”

“ Madam—my lord’s mother is unwell !”

“ Is she so—we will send for her more welcome news—methinks we are deserted to-day.”

As she spoke, she carelessly dropped her handkerchief—the haughty dame of the Colonna, bent not—not a hand stirred; and the Tribunessa, looked for a moment surprised and disconcerted. Her eye roving over the throng she perceived several, whom she knew as the wives of Rienzi’s foes whispering together with meaning glances,

and more than one malicious sneer at her mortification was apparent. She recovered herself instantly, and said to the Signora Frangipani, with a smile, "may we be a partaker of your mirth, you seem to have chanced on some gay thought, which it were a sin not to share freely."

The lady she addressed coloured slightly, and replied, "we were thinking, madam, that had the Tribune been present, his vow of knighthood would have been called into requisition."

" And how, Signora ?"

" It would have been his pleasing duty, madam, to succour the distrest." And the Signora glanced significantly on the kerchief still on the floor.

" You designed me then this slight, signoras," said Nina, rising with great majesty. " I know not whether your lords are equally bold to the Tribune; but this I know, that the Tribune's wife can in future forgive your absence. Four centuries ago, a Frangipani might well have stooped to a Raselli; to-day the dame of a Roman baron might acknowledge a superior in the wife of the first magistrate of Rome. I compell not your courtesy, nor seek it."

"We have gone too far," whispered one of the ladies to her neighbour. "Perhaps the enterprise may not succeed; and then"—

Farther remark was cut short, by the sudden entrance of the Tribune. He entered with great haste, and on his brow was that dark frown which none ever saw unquailing.

"How, fair matrons," said he, looking round the room with a rapid glance,—"*ye have not deserted us yet.* By the blessed cross, your lords pay a compliment to our honour, to leave us such lovely hostages, or else, God's truth, they are ungrateful husbands. So, madam, turning sharp round to the wife of Gianni Colonna, "*your husband is fled to Palestrina;* yours, Signora Orsini, to Marino; yours with him, fair bride of Frangipani,—*ye came hither to —.* But *ye* are sacred even from a word!"

The Tribune paused a moment, evidently striving to suppress his emotion, as he observed the terror he had excited—his eye fell upon Nina, who, forgetting her previous vexation, regarded him with anxious amazement. "Yes, madam," said he to her, "*you alone, perhaps, of this fair as-*

semblage know not that the nobles whom I lately released from the Headinan's gripe, are a second time forsown. They have left home in the dead of the night, and already the Heralds proclaim them traitors and rebels. *Rienzi forgives no more!*"

" Tribune," exclaimed the Signora Frangipani, who had more bold blood in her veins, than her whole house, " were I of thine own sex, I would cast the words, Traitor and Rebel, given to my lord, in thine own teeth.—Proud man, the Pontiff, soon will fulfil that office!"

" Your lord is blest with a dove, fair one," said the Tribune, scornfully. " Ladies, fear not, while Rienzi lives, the wife even of his worst foe, is safe and honoured. The crowd will be here anon; our guards shall attend ye home in safety, or this palace may be your shelter—for, I warn ye, that your lords have rushed into a great peril. And ere many days be past, the streets of Rome may be as rivers of blood."

" We accept your offer, Tribune," said the Signora Frangipani, who was touched, and, in spite of herself, awed by the Tribune's manner. And

as she spoke, she dropt on one knee, picked up the kerchief, and presenting it respectfully to Nina, said, “madam, forgive me. I alone of these present, respect you more in danger than in pride.”

“ And I,” returned Nina, as she leant in graceful confidence on Rienzi’s arm, “ I reply, that if there be danger, the more need of pride.”

All that day and all that night, rang the great bell of the Capitol. But on the following day-break, the assemblage was thin and scattered ; there was a great fear stricken into the hearts of the people, by the flight of the barons, and they bitterly and loudly upbraided Rienzi, for sparing them to this opportunity of mischief. That day the rumours continued ; the murmurers for the most part remained within their houses, or assembled in listless and discontented troops. The next day dawned ; the same lethargy prevailed. The Tribune summoned his council, (which was a Representative assembly).

“ Shall we go forth as we are,” said he, “ with such few as will follow the Roman standard ?”

“ No,” replied Pandulfo, who, by nature timid,

was yet well acquainted with the disposition of the people, and therefore a sagacious councillor—“ Let us hold back ; let us wait till the rebels commit themselves by some odious outrage, and then hatred will unite the waverers, and resentment lead them.”

This council prevailed ; the event proved its wisdom. To give excuse and dignity to the delay, messengers were sent to Marino, whither the chief part of the barons had fled, and which was strongly fortified, demanding their immediate return.

On the day on which the haughty refusal of the insurgents was brought to Rienzi, came fugitives from all parts of the Campagna. Houses burnt—convents and vineyards pillaged—cattle and horses seized—attested the warfare practised by the barons, and animated the drooping Romans, by showing the mercies they might expect for themselves. That evening, of their own accord, the Romans rushed into the place of the Capitol :—Rinaldo Orsini had seized a fortress in the immediate neighbourhood of Rome, and had set fire to a tower, the flames of which were visible to the city. The tenant of the tower, a noble lady, old

and widowed, was burnt alive. Then rose the wild clamour—the mighty wrath—the headlong fury. The hour for action had arrived.

* Ardea terre, arse la Castelluzza, e case, *e uomini*. Non si schifo di ardere una nobile donna Vedova, veterana, in una torre. Per tale crudeltade li Romani furo piu irati, &c.—Vita di C. di Rienzi.—Lib. 1. Chap. xx.

CHAP. III.

THE BATTLE.

“I HAVE dreamt a dream,” cried Rienzi, leaping from his bed. The lion-hearted Boniface, foe and victim of the Colonna, hath appeared to me, and promised victory. Nina, prepare the laurel-wreath: this day victory shall be ours!”

“Oh, Rienzi, to day?”

“Yes! hearken to the bell—hearken to the trumpet. Nay, I hear even now the impatient hoofs of my white war-steed!—One kiss, Nina, ere I arm for victory,—stay—comfort poor Irene; let me not see her—she weeps that my foes are akin to her betrothed; I cannot brook her tears; I watched her in her cradle. To-day I must have

no weakness on my soul! Knaves, twice-perjured!—wolves, never to be tamed!—shall I meet ye at last sword to sword! Away, sweet Nina, to Irene, quick. Adrian is at Naples, and were he in Rome, her lover is sacred, though fifty times a Colonna.”

With that, the Tribune passed into his wardrobe, where his pages and gentlemen attended with his armour. “I hear, by our spies,” said he, “that they will be at our gates ere noon—four thousand foot, seven hundred horsemen. We will give them a hearty welcome, my masters. How, Angelo Villani, my pretty page, what do you out of your lady’s service?”

“I would fain see a warrior arm for Rome,” said the boy, with a boy’s energy.

“Bless thee, my child, there spoke one of Rome’s true sons!”

“And the signora has promised me that I shall go with her guard to the gates, to hear the news—”

“And report the victory!—thou shalt. But they must not let thee come within shaft-shot. What! my Pandulfo, thou in mail!”

“Rome requires every man,” said the citizen, whose weak nerves were strung by the contagion of the general enthusiasm.

“She doth—and once more I am proud to be a Roman. Now, gentles, the Dalmaticum :* I would that every foe should know Rienzi: and, by the Lord of Hosts, fighting at the head of the imperial people, I have a right to the imperial robe! Are the friars prepared? Our march to the gates shall be preceded by a solemn hymn—so fought our sires.”

“Tribune, John di Vico, is arrived with a hundred horse, to support the Good State.”

“He hath!—The Lord has delivered us then of a foe, and given our dungeons a traitor!—Bring hither yon casket, Angelo.—so—Hark thee! Pandulfo, read this letter.”

The citizen read, with surprise and consternation, the answer of the wily prefect, to the Colonna’s epistle.

* A robe or mantle of white, borne by Rienzi; but properly, the emblem of empire.

"He promises the baron to desert to him in the battle, with the prefect's banner," said Pandulfo, "what is to be done?"

"What! take my signet—here—see him lodged forthwith in the prison of the Capitol. Bid his train leave Rome, and if found acting with the barons, warn them that their lord dies. Go—see to it without a moment's delay. Meanwhile, to the chapel—we will hear mass."

Within an hour the Roman army—vast, miscellaneous—old men and boys, mingled with the vigour of life, were on their march to the Gate of San Lorenzo; of their number, which amounted to twenty thousand foot, not one sixth could be deemed men at arms; but the cavalry was well equipped, and consisted of the lesser barons, and the more opulent citizens. At the head of these rode the Tribune in complete armour, and wearing on his casque a wreath of oak and olive leaves, wrought in silver. Before him waved the great gonfalon of Rome, while in front of this multitudinous array, marched a procession of monks of the order of St. Francis (for the ec-

clesiastical body of Rome went chiefly with the popular spirit, and its enthusiastic leader,) — slowly chanting the following hymn, which was made inexpressibly startling and imposing at the close of each stanza, by the clash of arms, the blast of trumpets, and the deep roll of the drum ; which formed, as it were, a martial chorus to the song.

ROMAN WAR SONG.

1

March, march for your hearths and your altars !
Curs'd to all time be the dastard that falters,
Never on earth may his sins be forgiven,
Death on his soul, shut the portals of heaven,
A curse on his heart, and a curse on his brain !—
Who strikes not for Rome, shall to Rome be her Cain !

Breeze fill our banners, sun gild our spears,

* *Santo Spirito, Cavaliers !*

Blow, trumpets, blow,

Blow, trumpets, blow,

Gaily to glory we come,

* Rienzi's word of battle.

Like a king in his pomp,
To the blast of the tromp,
And the roar of the mighty drum !
Breeze fill our banners, sun gild our spears,
Santo Spirito, Cavaliers !

2

March, march for your Freedom and Laws !
Earth is your witness—all Earth's is your cause !
Seraph and saint from their glory shall heed ye,
The angel that smote the Assyrian shall lead ye ;
To the Christ of the Cross man is never so holy
As in braving the proud in defence of the lowly !

Breeze fill our banners, sun gild our spears,

Santo Spirito, Cavaliers !

Blow, trumpets, blow,

Blow, trumpets, blow,

Gaily to glory we come,

Like a king in his pomp,

To the blast of the tromp,

And the roar of the mighty drum !

Breeze fill our banners, sun gild our spears,

Santo Spirito, Cavaliers !

March, march ! ye are sons of the Roman,
The sound of whose step was as fate to the foeman !
Whose realm, save the air and the wave, had no wall,
As he strode through the world like a lord in his hall ;
Though your fame hath sunk down to the night of the
grave,

It shall rise from the field like the sun from the wave.

Breeze fill our banners, sun gild our spears,
Santo Spirito, Cavaliers !

Blow, trumpets, blow,
Blow, trumpets, blow,
Gaily to glory we come,
Like a king in his pomp,
To the blast of the tromp,
And the roar of the mighty drum !

Breeze fill our banners, sun gild our spears,
Santo Spirito, Cavaliers !

In this order they reached the wide waste that
ruin and devastation left within the gates, and,
marshalled in long lines on either side, extending
far down the vistaed streets, and leaving a broad

space in the centre, awaited the order of their leader.

“Throw open the gates, and admit the foe!” cried Rienzi, with a loud voice; as the trumpets of the barons announced their approach.

Meanwhile the insurgent Patricians, who had marched that morning from a place called the Monument, four miles distant, came gallantly and boldly on.

With old Stephen, whose great height, gaunt frame, and lordly air shewed well in his gorgeous mail, rode his sons,—the Frangipani and the Savelli, and Giordano Orsini, brother to Rinaldo.

“To-day the tyrant shall perish,” said the proud baron. “And the flag of the Colonna shall wave from the Capitol.”

“The flag of the bear,” said Giordano Orsini angrily—“The victory will not be *yours* alone, my lord!”

“Our house ever took precedence in Rome,” replied the Colonna haughtily.

“Never, while one stone of the palaces of the Orsini stands upon another.”

“Hush!” said Luca di Savelli, “are ye dividing the skin while the lion lives. We shall have fierce work to-day.”

“Not so,” said the old Colonna—“John di Vico will turn, with his Romans, at the first onset, and some of the malcontents within have promised to open the gates.—How, knave?” as a scout rode up breathless to the baron, “What tidings?”

“The gates are opened—not a spear gleams from the walls!”

“Did I not tell ye, lords,” said the Colonna, turning round triumphantly. “Methinks, we shall win Rome without a single blow.—Grandson, where now are thy silly forebodings?” This was said to Pietro, one of his grandsons—the first-born of Gianni—a comely youth, not two weeks wedded, who made no reply. “My little Pietro here,” continued the baron, speaking to his comrades, is so new a bridegroom, that last night he dreamt of his bride; and deems it, poor lad, a portent.”

“She was in deep mourning, and glided from my arms, uttering, ‘Woe, woe, to the Colonna!’” said the young man solemnly.

"I have lived nearly ninety years," replied the old man, "and I may have dreamt, therefore, some forty thousand dreams; of which, two came true, and the rest were false. Judge, then, what chances are in favour of the science,"

Thus conversing, they approached within bow-shot of the gates, which were still open. All was silent as death. The army which was composed chiefly of foreign mercenaries, halted in deliberation—when, lo!—a torch was suddenly cast on high over the walls; it gleamed a moment—and then hissed in the miry pool below.

"It is the signal of our friends within, as agreed on," cried old Colonna. "Pietro, advance with your company!" The young nobleman closed his visor, put himself at the head of the band under his command; and, with his lance in his rest, rode in a half gallop to the gates. The morning had been clouded and overcast, and the sun, appearing only at intervals, now broke out in a bright stream of light—as it glittered on the waving plume and shining mail of the young horseman, disappearing under the gloomy arch, several paces in advance of his troop.

On swept his followers—forward went the cavalry headed by Gianni Colonna, Pietro's father—There was a minute's silence, save by the clatter of the arms, and tramp of hoofs,—when out rose the abrupt cry—“Rome, the Tribune, and the People! *Santo Spirito Cavaliers!*” The main body halted aghast. Suddenly Gianni Colonna was seen flying backward from the gate at full speed.

“My son, my son!” he cried, “they have murdered him.” He halted abrupt and irresolute, then added, “But I will avenge him!” wheeled round, spurred again through the arch, when a huge machine of iron, shaped as a portcullis, suddenly descended upon the unhappy father, and crushed man and horse to the ground—one blent, mangled, bloody, mass.

The old Colonna saw, and scarce believed his eyes; and ere his troop recovered its stupor, the machine rose, and over the corpse dashed the Popular Armament. Thousands upon thousands, they came on; a wild, clamourous, roaring stream They poured on all sides upon their enemies, who drawn up in steady discipline, and clad

in complete mail, received and broke their charge.

“Revenge, and the Colonna!”—“The bear and the Orsini!”—“Charity and the Frangipani!”*—Strike for the snake and the Savelli!” were then heard on high, mingled with the German and hoarse shout, “Full purses, and the Three kings of Cologne.” The Romans, rather fero- cious than disciplined, fell butchered in crowds round the ranks of the mercenaries; but as one fell, another succeeded; and still burst with undiminished fervour the counter cry of “Rome, the Tribune, and the People!”—“*Santo Spirito Cavaliers!*” Exposed to every shaft and every sword by his emblematic diadem, and his impe- rial robe, the fierce Rienzi led on each assault, wielding an enormous battle-axe, for the use of which the Italians were celebrated, and which he regarded as a national weapon. Inspired by every darker and sterner instinct of his nature, his blood heated, his passions aroused, fighting

* Who had taken their motto from some fabled ancestor who had broke bread with a beggar in a time of famine.

as a citizen for liberty, as a monarch for his crown, his daring seemed to the astonished foe as that of one frantic; his preservation that of one inspired; now here, now there; wherever flagged his own, or failed the opposing, force, glittered his white robe, and rose his bloody battle-axe; but his fury seemed rather directed against the chiefs than the herd; and still where his charger wheeled was heard his voice, “Where is a Colonna?”—“Defiance to the Orsini!”—*Santo Spirito Cavaliers!*” Three times was the sally led from the gate; three times were the Romans beaten back; and on the third, the gonfalon, borne before the Tribune, was cloven to the ground. Then, for the first time, he seemed amazed and alarmed, and, raising his eyes to heaven, he exclaimed, “O Lord, hast thou then forsaken me?” with that, taking heart, once more waived his arm, and again he led forward his wild array.

At eve the battle ceased. Of the barons who had been the main object of the Tribune’s assault, the pride and boast was broken. Of the princely line of the Colonna, three lay dead. Giordano

Orsini was mortally wounded; the fierce Rinaldo had not shared the conflict. Of the Frangipani the haughtiest signors were no more; and Luca, the dastard head of the Savellis, had long since saved himself by flight. On the other hand, the slaughter of the citizens had been prodigious;—the ground was swamped with blood—and over heaps of slain (steeds and riders), the twilight star beheld Rienzi and the Romans returning victors from the pursuit. Shouts of rejoicing followed the Tribune's panting steed through the arch; and just as he entered the space within, crowds of those whose infirmities, sex or years, had not allowed them to share the conflict,—women, and children, and drivelling age, mingled with the bare feet and dark robes of monks and friars, apprised of the victory, were prepared to hail his triumph.

Rienzi reined his steed by the corpse of the boy Colonna, which lay half immersed in a pool of water, and close by it, removed from the arch where he had fallen, lay that of Gianni Colonna,—(that Gianni Colonna whose spear had dismissed his brother's gentle spirit!) He glanced over the slain, as the melancholy Hesperus played

upon the bloody pool and the gory corslet, with a breast heaved with many emotions; and turning, he saw the young Angelo, who, with some of Nina's guard, had repaired to the spot, and had now approached the Tribune.

"Child," said Rienzi, pointing to the dead, "*Blessed art thou who hast no blood of kindred to avenge!*—to him who hath, sooner or later comes the hour—and an awful hour it is!"

The words sank deep into Angelo's heart, and in after life became words of fate to the speaker and the listener.

Ere Rienzi had well recovered himself, and as were heard around him the shrieks of the widows and mothers of the slain—the groans of the dying—the exhortations of the friars—mingled with sounds of joy and triumph,—a cry was raised by the women and stragglers on the battle-field without, of "The foe!—the foe!"

"To your swords," cried the Tribune, "fall back in order;—yet they cannot be so bold."

The tramp of horses—the blast of a trumpet were heard; and presently, at full speed, some thirty horsemen dashed through the gate.

"Your bows," exclaimed the Tribune, advan-

cing ;—yet hold—the leader is unarmed—it is our own banner. By our Lady, it is our ambassador of Naples, the lord Adrian di Castello!"

Panting — breathless — covered with dust — Adrian halted at the pool red with the blood of his kindred—and their pale faces, set in death, glared upon him.

Too late— alas! alas! —dread fate!—unhappy Rome!"

" They fell in the pit they themselves had digged," said the Tribune in a firm but hollow voice.—" Noble Adrian, would thy counsels had prevented this!"

" Away, proud man—away!" said Adrian, impatiently waving his hand,—“ thou shouldst protect the lives of Romans, and——oh, Gianni—Pietro—could not birth, renown, and thy green years, poor boy—could not these save ye?"

" Pardon him, my friends," said the Tribune to the crowd,—“ his grief is natural, and he knows not all their guilt.—Back, I pray ye—leave him to our ministring."

It might have fared ill for Adrian, but for the Tribune's brief speech. And as the young lord, dismounting, now bent over his kinsmen—the

Tribune also surrendering his charger to his 'squires, approached, and despite Adrian's reluctance and aversion, drew him aside,—

“ Young friend,” said he, mournfully, “ my heart bleeds for you—yet bethink thee, the wrath of the crowd is fresh upon them—be prudent.”

“ Prudent!”

“ Hush—By my honour, these men were not worthy of your name. Twice perjured—once assassins—twice rebels—listen to me !”

“ Tribune, I ask no other construing of what I see—they might have died justly, or been butchered foully. But there is no peace between the executioner of my race and me.”

“ Will *you* too be forsown. Thine oath!—Come, come, I hear not these words. Be composed—retire—and if three days hence, you impute any other blame to me, than that of unwise lenity, I absolve you from your oath, and you are free to be my foe. The crowd gape and gaze upon us—a minute more, and I may not avail to save you.”

The feelings of the young Patrician, were such as utterly baffle description. He had never been much amongst his house, nor—ever received

more than common courtesy at their hands. But lineage, is lineage still! And there, in the fatal hazard of war, lay the tree and sapling, the prime and hope of his race. He felt there was no answer to the Tribune, the very place of their death, proved they had fallen in the assault upon their countrymen. He sympathized not with their cause, but their fate. And rage, revenge alike forbidden—his heart was the more softened to the shock and paralysis of grief. He did not therefore speak, but continued to gaze upon the dead, while large and unheeded tears flowed down his cheeks, and his attitude of dejection and sorrow was so moving, that the crowd at first indignant, now felt for his affliction. At length his mind seemed made up. He turned to Rienzi, and said falteringly, “Tribune, I blame you not, nor accuse. If you have been rash in this, God will have blood for blood. I wage no war with you—you say right, my oath prevents me; and if you govern well, I can still remember that I am Roman. But—but—look to that bleeding clay—we meet no more!—your sister—God be with her!—between her and me, flows a dark gulf! The

young noble paused some moments, choked by his emotions, and then continued, “these papers discharge me of my mission. Standard-bearers lay down the banner of the Republic. Tribune, speak not—I would be calm—calm.—And so—farewell to Rome.” With a hurried glance towards the dead, he sprung upon his steed, and followed by his train, vanished through the arch.

The Tribune had not attempted to detain him—had not interrupted him. He felt that the young noble had thought—acted as became him best. He followed him with his eyes.

“ And thus,” said he, gloomily—“ Fate plucks from me my noblest friend, and my justest councillor—a better man Rome never lost !”

Such is the eternal doom of disordered states. The mediator between rank and rank,—the kindly noble—the dispassionate patriot—the first to act —the most hailed in action—darkly vanishes from the scene. Fiercer and more unscrupulous spirits alone stalk the field; and no neutral and harmonizing link remains between hate and hate,—until exhaustion, sick with horrors, succeeds to frenzy,—and despotism is welcomed as repose !

CHAP. IV.

THE HOLLOWNESS OF THE BASE.

THE rapid and busy march of state events has led us long away from the sister of the Tribune and the betrothed of Adrian. And the sweet thoughts and gentle day-dreams of that fair and enamoured girl, however full to *her* of an interest beyond all the storms and perils of ambition, are not so readily adapted to narration:—their soft monotony a few words can paint. They knew but one image, they tended to but one prospect.—Shrinking from the glare of her brother's court, and eclipsed, when she forced herself to appear, by the more matured and dazzling beauty, and

all-commanding presence of Nina,—to her the pomp and crowd seemed an unreal pageant, from which she retired to the *truth of life*,—the hopes and musings of her own heart. Poor girl! with all the soft and tender nature of her dead brother, and none of the stern genius and the prodigal ambition,—the eye-aching ostentation and fervour of the living,—she was but ill-fitted for the unquiet but splendid region to which she was thus suddenly transferred.

With all her affection for Rienzi, she could not conquer a certain fear which, conjoined with the difference of sex and age, forbade her to be communicative with him upon the subject most upon her heart.

As the absence of Adrian at the Neapolitan Court passed the anticipated date, (for at no Court then, with a throne fiercely disputed, did the Tribune require a nobler or more intelligent representative,—and intrigues and counter-intrigues delayed his departure from week to week,) she grew uneasy and alarmed. Like many, themselves unseen, inactive, the spectators of the scene, she saw involuntarily farther into the time than the

deeper intellect either of the Tribune or Nina; and the dangerous discontent of the nobles was visible and audible to her in looks and whispers, which reached not acuter or more suspected ears and eyes. Anxiously, restlessly, did she long for the return of Adrian, not from selfish motives alone, but from well-founded apprehensions for her brother. With Adrian di Castello, alike a noble and a patriot, each party had found a mediator, and his presence grew daily more needed, till at length the conspiracy of the Barons had broken out. From that hour she scarce dared to hope ; her calm sense, unblinded by the high-wrought genius which, as too often happens, made the Tribune see harsh realities through a false and brilliant light, felt that the Rubicon was passed ; and through all the events that followed she could behold but two images—danger to her brother, separation from her betrothed.

With Nina alone could her full heart confer ; for Nina, with all the differences of character, was a woman who loved. And this united them. In the earlier power of Rienzi, many of their happiest hours had been passed together, remote from the

gaudy crowd, alone and unrestrained, in the summer nights, on the moonlit balconies, in that interchange of thought, sympathy, and consolation which to two impassioned and guileless women makes the most interesting occupation and the most effectual solace. But of late this intercourse had been much marred. From the morning in which the Barons had received their pardon to that on which they had marched on Rome, had been one succession of fierce excitements. Every face Irene saw was clouded and overcast—all gaiety was suspended—bustling and anxious counsellors, or armed soldiers, had for days been the only visitors of the palace. Rienzi had been seen but for short moments: his brow wrapt in care. Nina had been more fond, more caressing than ever, but in those caresses there seemed a mournful and ominous compassion. The attempts at comfort and hope were succeeded by a sickly smile and broken words; and Irene was prepared, by the presentiments of her own heart, for the stroke that fell—victory was to her brother—his foe was crushed—Rome was free—but the lofty house of the Colonnas had lost its stateliest props, and

Adrian was gone for ever!—she did not blame him; she could not blame her brother; each had acted as became his several station. She was the poor sacrifice of events and fate—the Iphigenia to the Winds which were to bear the bark of Rome to the haven, or, it might be, to whelm it in the abyss. She was stunned by the blow; she did not even weep or complain; she bowed to the storm that swept over her, and it passed. For two days she neither took food nor rest; she shut herself up, she asked only the boon of solitude: but on the third morning she recovered as by a miracle, for on the third morning the following letter was left at the palace.

“IRENE,—Ere this you have learnt my deep cause of grief; you feel that to a Colonna Rome can no longer be a home, nor Rome’s Tribune be a brother. While I write these words honour but feebly supports me: all the hopes I had formed, all the prospects I had pictured, all the love I bore and bear thee rush upon my heart, and I can only feel that I am wretched. Irene, Irene, your sweet face rises before me, and in those beloved eyes I

read that I am forgiven,—I am understood; and dearly as I know thou lovest me, thou wouldest rather I were lost to thee, rather I were in the grave with my kinsmen, than know I lived the reproach of my order, the recreant of my name. Ah! why was I a Colonna? why did fortune make me noble, and nature and circumstance attach me to the people? I am barred alike from love and from revenge; all my revenge falls upon thee and me. Adored! we are perhaps separated for ever; but, by all the happiness I have known by thy side—by all the rapture of which I dreamed—by that delicious hour which first gave thee to my gaze, when I watched the soft soul returning to thine eyes and lip—by thy first blushing confession of love—by our first kiss—by our last farewell—I swear to be faithful to thee to the last. None other shall ever chase thine image from my heart. And now, when Hope seems over, Faith becomes doubly sacred; and thou, my beautiful, wilt thou not remember me? wilt thou not feel as if we were the betrothed of heaven? In the legends of the North we are told of the knight who, returning from the Holy Land, found his

mistress (believing his death) the bride of heaven, and he built a hermitage by the convent where she dwelt, and though they never saw each other more their souls were faithful unto death. Even so, Irene, be we to each other—dead to all else—betrothed in memory—to be wedded above! And yet, yet ere I close, one hope dawns upon me. Thy brother's career, bright and lofty, may be but as a falling star; should darkness swallow it, should his power cease, should his throne be broken, and Rome know no more her Tribune; shouldst thou no longer have a brother in the judge and destroyer of my house; shouldst thou be stricken from pomp and state; shouldst thou be friendless, kindredless, alone—then, without a stain on mine honour, without the shame and odium of receiving power and happiness from hands yet red with the blood of my race, I may claim thee as my own. Honour ceases to command when thou ceasest to be great. I dare not indulge farther in this dream, perchance it is a sin in both. But it must be whispered, that thou mayest know all thy Adrian, all his weakness and his strength. My own loved, my ever loved,

loved more fondly now when loved despairingly, farewell ! May angels heal thy sorrow, and guard me from sin, that hereafter at least we may meet again !”

“ He loves me—he loves me still !” said the maiden, weeping at last, “ and I am blest once more !”

With that letter pressed to her heart she recovered outwardly from the depth of her affliction ; she met her brother with a smile, and Nina with embraces ; and if still she pined and sorrowed, it was that “ concealment ” which is the “ worm i’ the bud.”

Meanwhile, after the first blush of victory, lamentation succeeded to joy in Rome ; so great had been the slaughter that the private grief was large enough to swallow up all public triumph ; and many of the mourners blamed even their defender for the swords of the assailant, “ *Roma fu terribilmente vedovata.* ” The numerous funerals deeply affected the Tribune ; and, in proportion to his sympathy with his people, grew his stern indignation against the Barons. Like all men

whose religion is intense, passionate, and zealous; the Tribune had little toleration for those crimes which went to the root of religion. Perjury was to him the most base and inexpiable of offences, and the slain Barons had been twice perjured: in the bitterness of his wrath he forbade their families for some days to minister and lament over their remains; and it was only in private and in secret that he permitted them to be interred in their ancestral vaults; an excess of vengeance which sullied his laurels, but which was scarcely inconsistent with the stern patriotism of his character. Impatient to finish what he had begun, anxious to march at once to Marino, where the insurgents collected their shattered force, he summoned his council, and represented the certainty of victory, and its result in the complete restoration of peace. But pay was due to the soldiery; they already murmured; the treasury was emptied, it was necessary to fill it by raising a new tax.

Among the councillors were some whose families had suffered grievously in the battle—they lent a lukewarm attention to propositions of continued strife. Others, among whom was Pandulfo, timid

but well-meaning, aware that grief and terror even of their own triumph had produced reaction amongst the people—declared that they would not venture to propose a new tax. A third party, headed by Baroncelli—a demagogue whose ambition was without principle—but who, by pandering to the worst passions of the populace, by a sturdy coarseness of nature with which they sympathised—and by that affectation of advancing what we now term the “movement,” which often gives to the fiercest fool an advantage over the most prudent statesman, had quietly acquired a great influence with the lower ranks—offered a more bold opposition. They dared even to blame the proud Tribune for the gorgeous extravagance they had themselves been the first to recommend—and half insinuated sinister and treacherous motives in his acquittal of the Barons from the accusation of Rodolf. In the very Parliament the Tribune had revived and remodelled for the support of freedom—freedom was abandoned. His fiery eloquence met with a gloomy silence, and finally, the votes were against his propositions for the new tax and the march to Marino. Rienzi broke up the

council in haste and disorder. As he left the hall, a letter was put into his hands; he read it and remained for some moments as one thunderstruck—he then summoned the Captain of his Guards, and ordered a band of fifty horsemen to be prepared for his commands; he repaired to Nina's apartment, he found her alone, and stood for some moments gazing upon her so intently that she was awed and chilled from all attempt at speech. At length he said abruptly—

“ We must part.”

“ Part ! ”

“ Yes, Nina—Your guard is preparing, you have relations, I have friends, at Florence. Florence must be your home.”

“ Cola,—”

“ Look not on me thus—In power, in state, in safety—you were my ornament and councillor. Now you but embarrass me. And”—

“ Oh Cola speak not thus. What hath chanced ? Be not so cold—frown not—turn not away. Am I not something more to thee, than the partner of joyous hours—the minion of love. Am I not thy wife, Cola—not thy leman ! ”

"Too dear—too dear to me," muttered the Tribune; "with thee by my side I shall be but half a Roman. Nina, the base slaves whom I myself made free desert me.—Now, in the very hour in which I might sweep away for ever all obstacles to the regeneration of Rome, now, when one conquest points the path to complete success—now when the land is visible, my fortune suddenly leaves me in the midst of the seas ! There is greater danger now than in the rage of the Barons—the Barons are fled ; it is the People who are becoming traitors to Rome and to me."

"And wouldest thou have *me* traitor also ? No Cola ; in death itself Nina shall be beside thee. Life and honour are reflected but from thee, and the stroke that slays the substance, shall destroy the humble shadow. I will not part from thee."

"Nina," said the Tribune, contending with strong and convulsive emotion—"it may be literally of *death* that you speak.—Go ! leave one who can no longer protect you or Rome !"

"Never—Never."

"You are resolved."

"I am."

“ Be it so,” said the Tribune, with deep sadness in his tone. “ Arm thee for the worst.”

“ There is no *worst* with thee, Cola ! ”

“ Come to my arms, brave woman ; thy words rebuke my weakness. But Irene !—if *I* fall *you* will not survive—your beauty a prey to the most lustful heart and the strongest hand. We will have the same tomb on the wrecks of Roman liberty. But my sister is of weaker mould ; poor child, I have robbed her of a lover, and now—”

“ You are right, let Irene go. And in truth we may well disguise from her the real cause of her departure. Change of scene were best for her grief ; and under all circumstances would seem decorum to the curious. I will see and prepare her.”

“ Do so, sweetheart. I would gladly be a moment alone with thought. But remember she must part to-day—our sands run low.”

As the door closed on Nina the Tribune took out the letter and again read it deliberately. “ So the Pope’s Legate left Sienna :—prayed that Republic to withdraw its auxiliary troops from Rome—proclaimed me a rebel and a heretic ;—thence

repaired to Marino ;— now in council with the Barons. Why, have my dreams belied me then—false as the waking things that flatter and betray by day? In such peril will the people forsake me and themselves? Army of saints and martyrs, shades of heroes and patriots, have ye abandoned for ever your ancient home? No, No, I was not raised to perish thus; I will defeat them yet—and leave my name a legacy to Rome; a warning to the oppressor—an example to the free ! ”

CHAPTER V.

THE ROTTENNESS OF THE EDIFICE.

THE kindly skill of Nina induced Irene to believe that it was but the tender consideration of her brother to change a scene embittered by her own thoughts, and in which the notoriety of her engagement with Adrian exposed her to all that could mortify and embarrass, which led to the proposition of her visit to Florence. Its suddenness was ascribed to the occasion of an unexpected mission to Florence (for a loan of arms and money), which thus gave her a safe and honoured escort.—Passively she submitted to what she herself deemed a relief—and it was agreed that she should for awhile be the guest of a relation of Nina's, who was the abbess of one of the wealthiest of the

Florentine convents—the idea of monastic seclusion was welcome to the bruised heart and wearied spirit.

But though not apprised of the immediate peril of Rienzi, it was with deep sadness and gloomy forebodings that she returned his embrace and parting blessing; and when at length alone in her litter, and beyond the gates of Rome, she repented a departure to which the chance of danger gave the seeming of desertion.

Meanwhile as the declining day closed around the litter and its troop, more turbulent actors in the drama demand our audience. The traders and artizans of Rome at that time, and especially during the popular government of Rienzi, held weekly meetings in each of the thirteen quarters of the city. And in the most democratic of these, Cecco del Vecchio was an oracle and leader. It was at that assembly, over which the smith presided, that the murmurs that preceded the earthquake were heard.

“So,” cried one of the company—Luigi, the goodly butcher, “they say he wanted to put a new tax on us; and that is the reason he broke up

the Council to-day ;—because, good men, they were honest, and had bowels for the people; it is a shame and a sin that the treasury should be empty.”

“ I told him,” said the smith, “ to beware how he taxed the people. Poor men won’t be taxed. But as he does not follow my advice, he must take the consequence—the horse runs from one hand, the halter remains in the other.”

“ Take *your* advice, Cecco ! I warrant me his stomach is too high for that now. Why he is grown as proud as a pope.”

“ For all that, he is a great man,” said one of the party. “ He gave us laws—he rid the Campagna of robbers—filled the streets with merchants, and the shops with wares—defeated the boldest lords and fiercest soldiery of Italy——”

“ And now wants to tax the people!—that’s all the thanks we get for helping him,” said the grumbling Cecco. “ What would he have been without us?—we that make can unmake.”

“ But,” continued the advocate, seeing that he had his supporters—“ But then he taxes us for our own liberties.”

“ Who strikes at them now ? ” asked the butcher.

“ Why the Barons are daily mustering new strength at Marino.”

“ Marino is not Rome,” said Luigi the butcher. “ Let’s wait till they come to our gates again—we know how to receive them. Though, for the matter of that, I think we have had enough fighting—my two poor brothers had each a stab too much for them. Why won’t the Tribune, if he *be* a great man, let us have peace. All we want now is quiet.”

“ Ah ! ” said a seller of horse-harness. “ Let him make it up with the Barons. They were good customers after all.”

“ For my part,” said a merry-looking fellow, who had been a grave-digger in bad times, and had now opened a stall of wares for the living, “ I could forgive him all, but bathing in the holy vase of porphyry.”

“ Ah, that was a bad job,” said several, shaking their heads.

“ And the knighthood was but a silly show, an it were not for the wine from the horse’s nostrils—that had some sense in it.”

“ My masters,” said Cecco, “ the folly was in not beheading the Barons when he had them all in

the net, and so Messere Baroncelli says. (Ah, Baroncelli is an honest man, and follows no half measures!)—it was a sort of treason to the people not to do so. Why, but for that, we should never have lost so many tall fellows by the gate of San Lorenzo.”

“ True, true, it was a shame; some say the Barons bought him.”

“ And then,” said another, “ those poor Lords Colonna—boy and man—they were the best of the family, save the Castello. I vow I pitied them.”

“ But to the point,” said one of the crowd, *the richest of the set*, “ *the tax is the thing.*—The ingratitude to tax *us*.—Let him dare do it ! ”

“ Oh, he will not dare, for I hear that the pope’s bristles are up at last; so he will only have *us* to depend upon ! ”

The door was thrown open—a man rushed in open-mouthed—

“ Masters, masters, the pope’s legate has arrived at Rome, and sent for the Tribune, who has just left his presence.”

Ere his auditors had recovered their surprise, the sound of trumpets made them rush forth; they saw Rienzi sweep by with his usual cavalcade, and

in his proud array. The twilight was advancing, and torch-bearers preceded his way. Upon his countenance was deep calm, but it was not the calm of contentment. He passed on, and the street was again desolate. Meanwhile Rienzi reached the Capitol in silence, and mounted to the apartments of the palace, where Nina, pale and breathless, awaited his return.

“ Well, well, thou smilest ! No—it is that dread smile, worse than frowns. Speak, beloved, speak. What said the Cardinal ? ”

“ Little thou wilt love to hear. He spoke at first high and solemnly, about the crime of declaring the Romans free ; next about the treason of asserting that the election of the king of Rome was in the hands of the Romans.”

“ Well—thy answer.”

“ That which became Rome’s Tribune, I reasserted each right, and proved it. The Cardinal passed to other charges.

“ What ! ”

“ The blood of the Barons by San Lorenzo, blood only shed in our own defence against perjured assailants ; this is in reality the main crime. The

Colonnas have the Pope's ear. Furthermore, the sacrilege—yes, the sacrilege (come, laugh, Nina, laugh !) of bathing in a vase of porphyry used by Constantine while yet a heathen."

"Can it be ! What saidst thou ?"

"I laughed. 'Cardinal,' quoth I, 'what was not too good for a heathen is not too good for a Christian Catholic !' And verily the sour Frenchman looked as if I had smote him on the hip.

"When he had done, I asked him, in my turn, 'Is it alleged against me that I have wronged one man in my judgment-court ?'—Silence. 'Is it said that I have broken one law of the state ?'—Silence. 'Is it even whispered that trade does not flourish—that life is not safe—that abroad or at home the Roman name is not honoured, to that point which no former rule can parallel ?'—Silence. 'Then,' said I, 'Lord Cardinal, I demand thy thanks, not thy censure.' His eminence looked, and looked, and trembled, and shrunk, and then out he spake. 'I have but one mission to fulfil, on the part of the Pontiff—resign at once thy Tribune-ship, or the Church inflicts upon thee its solemn curse.'"

“ How—how ! ” said Nina, turning very pale ;
“ what is it that awaits thee ? ”

“ Excommunication ! ”

This awful sentence, by which the spiritual arm had so often stricken down the fiercest foe, came to Nina’s ear as a knell. She covered her face with her hands. Rienzi paced the room with rapid strides. “ The curse ! ” he muttered ; “ the Church’s curse—for me—for ME ! ”

“ Oh, Cola ! didst thou not seek to pacify this stern——”

“ Pacify ! Death and dishonour ! Pacify ! ‘ Cardinal,’ I said, and I felt his soul shrivel at my gaze, ‘ my power I received from the people—to the people alone I render it. For my soul, man’s word cannot scathe it. Thou, haughty priest, thou art thyself the accursed, if, puppet and tool of low cabals and exiled tyrants, thou breathest but a breath in the name of the Lord of Justice, for the cause of the oppressor, and against the rights of the oppressed.’ With that I left him, and now——”

“ Ay, now—now what will happen ? Excommunication ! In the metropolis of the Church, too—the superstition of the people ! Oh, Cola ! ”

"If," muttered Rienzi, "my conscience condemned me of one crime—if I had stained my hands in one just man's blood—if I had broken one law I myself had framed—if I had taken bribes or wronged the poor, or scorned the orphan, or shut my heart to the widow—then, then—but no! Lord, *thou* wilt not desert me!"

"But *man* may!" thought Nina mournfully, as she perceived that one of Rienzi's dark fits of fanatical and mystical reverie was growing over him—fits which he suffered no living eye, not even Nina's, to witness when they gathered to their height. And now, indeed, after a short interval of muttered soliloquy, in which his face worked so that the veins on his temple swelled up like cords, he abruptly left the room, and sought the private oratory connected with his closet. Over the emotions there indulged let us draw the veil. Who shall describe those awful and mysterious moments, when man, with all his fiery passions, turbulent thoughts, wild hopes and despondent fears, demands the solitary audience of his Maker?

It was long after this conference with Nina, and the midnight bell had long tolled, when Rienzi

stood alone, upon one of the balconies of the palace, to cool, in the starry air, the fever that yet lingered on his exhausted frame. The night was exceedingly calm, the air clear but chill, for it was now December. He gazed intently upon those solemn orbs to which our wild credulity has referred the prophecies of our doom.

“Vain science!” thought the Tribune, “and gloomy fantasy, that man’s fate is pre-ordained—irrevocable—unchangeable, from the moment of his birth! Yet, were the dream not baseless, fain would I know which of yon stately lights is my natal star which images—which reflects—my career in life, and the memory I shall leave in death.” As this thought crossed him, and his gaze was still fixed above, he saw, as if made suddenly more distinct than the stars around it, that rapid and fiery comet which in the winter of 1347 dismayed the superstitions of those who recognised in the stranger of the heavens the omen of disaster and of woe. He recoiled as it met his eye, and muttered to himself, “Is such indeed my type! or, if the legendary lore speak true, and these strange fires portend nations ruined and rulers overthrown, does

it foretel my fate ? I will think no more *." As his eyes fell, they rested upon the colossal Lion of Basalt in the place below, the starlight investing its grey and towering form with a more ghostly whiteness, and then it was, that he perceived two figures in black robes lingering by the pedestal which supported the statue, and apparently engaged in some occupation which he could not guess. A fear shot through his veins, for he had never been able to divest himself of the vague idea that there was some solemn and appointed connection between his fate and that dismal relic. Somewhat relieved, he heard his sentry challenge the intruders ; and as they came forward to the light, he perceived that they wore the garments of monks.

" Molest us not, son," said one of them. " By order of the Legate of the Holy Father we but affix to this public monument of justice and of wrath, the bull of excommunication against a heretic and rebel. Woe to the Accursed of the Church !"

* Alas ! if by the Romans associated with the fall of Rienzi, that comet was by the rest of Europe connected with the more dire calamity of the Great Plague that so soon afterwards ensued.

CHAP. VI.

THE FALL OF THE TEMPLE.

IT was as a thunderbolt in a serene day—the reverse of the Tribune in the zenith of his power, in the abasement of his foe; when with but a handful of brave Romans, determined to be free, he might have crushed for ever the antagonist power to the Roman liberties—have secured the rights of his country, and filled up the measure of his own renown. Such a reverse was the very mockery of Fate, who bore him through disaster, to abandon him in the sunniest noon of his prosperity.

The next morning not a soul was to be seen in the streets; the shops were shut—the churches

closed ; the city was as under an interdict. The awful curse of the papal excommunication upon the chief magistrate of the pontifical city, seemed to freeze up all the arteries of life. The legate, himself, affecting fear of his life, had fled to Monte Fiascone, where he was joined by the Barons immediately after the publication of the edict. The curse worked best in the absence of the execrator.

Towards evening a few persons might be seen traversing the broad space of the Capitol, crossing themselves, as the bull, placarded on the Lion, met their eyes, and disappearing within the great doors of the palace. By and by, a few anxious groups collected in the streets, but they soon dispersed. It was a paralysis of all intercourse and commune. That spiritual and unarmed authority, which, like the invisible hand of God, desolated the market-place, and humbled the crowned head—no physical force could rally against or resist. Yet, through the universal awe, one conviction touched the multitude—it was for them that their Tribune was thus blasted in the midst of his glories ! The words of

the Brand recorded against him on wall and column detailed his offences—rebellion in asserting the liberties of Rome—heresy in purifying ecclesiastical abuses ;—and, to serve for a miserable covert to the rest, it was sacrilege for bathing in the porphyry vase of Constantine. They felt the conviction ; they sighed—they shuddered—and, in his vast palace, save a few attached and devoted hearts, the Tribune was alone !

The staunchest of his Tuscan soldiery were gone with Irene. The rest of his force, save a few remaining guards, was the paid Roman militia, composed of citizens ; who, long discontented by the delay of their stipends, now seized on the excuse of the excommunication to remain passive, but grumbling, in their homes.

On the third day, a new incident broke upon the death-like lethargy of the city ; a hundred and fifty mercenaries, with Pepin of Minorbino, a Neapolitan, half noble, half bandit—(a creature of Montreal's) at their head, entered the city, seized upon the fortresses of the Colonna, and sent a herald through the city, proclaiming, in the name

of the Cardinal Legate,—the reward of ten thousand florins for the head of Cola di Rienzi.

Then, swelled on high, shrill and inspiring as of old, the great bell of the Capitol—the people, listless, disheartened, awed by the spiritual fear of the papal authority, (yet greater, on such events, since the removal of the see,) came unarmed to the Capitol; and there, by the Place of the Lion, stood the Tribune. His squires, below the step, held his war-horse, his helm, and the same battle-axe which had blazed in the van of victorious war.

Beside him were a few of his guard, his attendants, and two or three of the principal citizens.

He stood bare-headed and erect, gazing upon the abashed and unarmed crowd with a look of bitter scorn, mingled with deep compassion; and as the bell ceased its toll, and the throng remained hushed and listening, he thus spoke :—

“ Ye come, then, once again !...Come ye as slaves or freemen? A handful of armed men are in your walls: will ye who chased from your gates the haughtiest knights—the most practised battle-men of Rome, succumb now to one hundred and fifty

hirelings and strangers?... Will ye arm for your Tribune? You are silent!—be it so. Will you arm for *your own* liberties—*your own* Rome?—silent still! By the saints that reign on the throne of the heathen gods, are ye thus fallen from your birth-right? Have you no arms for your own defence? Romans, hear me! Have I wronged you—if so, by *your* hands let me die: and then, with knives yet reeking with my blood, go forward against the robber who is but the herald of your slavery; and I die honoured, grateful, and avenged. You weep. Great God, you weep! Ay, and I could weep, too—that I should live to speak of liberty in vain to Romans—Weep!—is this an hour for tears!—Weep now, and your tears shall ripen harvests of crime, and licence and despotism to come! Romans, arm; follow me at once to the Place of the Colonna: expel this ruffian—expel your enemy—(no matter what afterwards you do to me):” he paused; no ardour was kindled by his words—“or,” he continued, “I abandon you to your fate.” There was a long low general murmur, at length it became shaped into speech; and many voices

cried simultaneously—"The Pope's bull—Thou art a man accursed!"

"What!" cried the Tribune; "and is it *ye* who forsake me, for whose cause alone man dares to hurl against me the thunders of his God! Is it not for *you* that I am declared heretic and rebel? What are my imputed crimes? that I have *made* Rome and *asserted* Italy to be free!—that I have subdued the proud Magnates, who were the scourge both of Pope and people. And you—you upbraid me with what I have dared and done for you! Men, *with* you I would have fought, *for* you I would have perished. You forsake yourselves in forsaking me, and since I no longer rule over brave men, I resign my power to the tyrant you prefer. Seven months I have ruled over you, prosperous in commerce, stainless in justice—victorious in the field:—I have shown you what Rome could be; and, since I abdicate the government ye gave me,—when I am gone, strike for your own freedom! It matters nothing who is the chief of a brave and great people. Prove that Rome hath many a Rienzi, but of brighter fortunes."

"I would he had not sought to tax us," said Cecco del Vecchio, who was the very incarnation of the vulgar feeling; "and that he had beheaded the Barons."

"Ay!" cried the ex-grave-digger; "but that blessed porphyry vase!"

"And why should we get our throats cut," said the butcher, "like my two brothers—God rest them."

On the face of the general multitude there was a common expression of irresolution and shame, many wept and groaned, none (save the aforesaid grumbler) *accused*; none upbraided, but none seemed disposed to arm. It was one of those listless panics, those strange fits of indifference and lethargy which often seize upon a people who make liberty a matter of impulse and caprice, to whom it has become a catchword, who have not long enjoyed all its rational, and sound, and practical, and blessed results; who have been affrayed by the storms that herald its dawn;—a people such as is common to the south: such as even the north has known; such as, had Cromwell lived a year

longer, even England might have seen; and, indeed, in some measure such a reaction from popular enthusiasm to popular indifference England *did* see, when her children madly surrendered the fruits of a bloody war, without reserve, without foresight, to the lewd pensioner of Louis, and the royal murderer of Sidney. To such prostration of soul, such blindness of intellect, even the noblest people will be subjected, when liberty, which should be the growth of ages, spreading its roots through the strata of a thousand customs, is raised, the exotic of an hour, and (like the Tree and Dryad of ancient fable) flourishes and withers with the single spirit that protects it.

“ Oh Heaven, that I were a man ! ” exclaimed Angelo, who stood behind Rienzi.

“ Hear him, hear the boy,” cried the Tribune: “ out of the mouths of babes speaketh wisdom ! He wishes that he were a man, as ye are men, that he might do as ye should do. Mark me,— I ride with these faithful few through the quarter of the Colonna, before the fortress of your foe. Three times before that fortress shall my trum-

pets sound, if at the third blast ye come not, armed as befits ye—I say not all, but three, but two, but *one* hundred of ye—I break up my wand of office, and the world shall say one hundred and fifty robbers quelled the soul of Rome, and crushed her magistrate and her laws ! ”

With those words he descended the stairs, and mounted his charger ; the populace gave way in silence, and their Tribune and his slender train passed slowly on, and gradually vanished from the view of the increasing crowd.

The Romans remained on the place, and after a pause, the demagogue Baroncelli, who saw an opening to his ambition, addressed them. Though not an eloquent nor gifted man, he had the art of uttering the most popular commonplaces. And he knew the weak side of his audience, in their vanity, indolence, and arrogant pride.

“ Look you, my masters,” said he, leaping up to the place of the Lion ; “ the Tribune talks bravely, he always did, but the monkey used the cat for his chestnuts ; he wants to thrust your paws into the fire, you will not be so silly as to let him. The saints bless us ; but the Tribune, good man,

gets a palace and has banquets, and bathes in a porphyry vase ; the more shame on him—in which San Sylvester christened the Emperor Constantine; all this is worth fighting for ; but you, my masters, what do *you* get except hard blows, and a stare at a holiday spectacle ? Why, if you beat these fellows, you will have another tax on the wine, *that* will be *your* reward !”

“ Hark,” cried Cecco, “ there sounds the trumpet,—a pity he wanted to tax us.”

“ True,” cried Baroncelli, “ there sounds the trumpet, a *silver* trumpet by the Lord ! Next week, if you help him out of the scrape, he’ll have a golden one. But go—why don’t you move, my friends, ’tis but one hundred and fifty mercenaries; true, they are devils to fight, clad in armour from top to toe ; but what then,—if they do cut some four or five hundred throats, you’ll beat them at last, and the Tribune will sup the merrier.”

“ There goes the second blast,” said the butcher. “ If my old mother had not lost two of us already, ’tis odds, but I’d strike a blow for the bold Tribune.”

“ You had better put more quicksilver in you,”

continued Baroncelli, “ or you’ll be too late. And what a pity that will be!—if you believe the Tribune, he is the only man that can save Rome. What, you, the finest people in the world—you, not able to save yourselves!—you, bound up with one man—you, not able to dictate to the Colonna and Orsini ! Why, who beat the Barons at San Lorenzo ? Was it not you ? Ah ! you got the buffets, and the Tribune the *moneta* ! Tush, my friends, let the man go ; I warrant there are plenty as good as he to be bought a cheaper bargain. And,—hark ! there is the third blast ; it is too late now !”

As the trumpet from the distance sounded its long and melancholy note, it was as the last warning of the parting genius of the place ; and when silence swallowed up the sound, a gloom fell over the whole assembly. They began to regret, to repent, when regret and repentance availed no more ; the buffoonery of Baroncelli became suddenly displeasing ; and the orator had the mortification of seeing his audience disperse in all directions, just as he was about to inform them what great things he himself could do in their behalf.

Meanwhile the Tribune passing unscathed

through the dangerous quarter of the enemy, who, dismayed at his approach, shrunk within their fortress, proceeded to the Castle of St. Angelo, whither Nina had already preceded him ; and which he entered to find that proud lady with a smile for his safety,—without a tear for his reverse.

CHAP. VII.

THE SUCCESSORS OF AN UNSUCCESSFUL REVOLUTION.—WHO IS TO BLAME—THE FORSAKEN ONE OR THE FORSAKERS?

CHEERFULLY broke the winter sun over the streets of Rome, as the army of the Barons swept along them. The Cardinal Legate at the head; the old Colonna (no longer haughty and erect, but bowed, and broken-hearted at the loss of his sons) at his right hand;—the sleek smile of Luca Savelli—the black frown of Rinaldo Orsini, were seen close behind. A long but barbarous array it was; made up of chiefly foreign hirelings; nor did the procession resemble the return of exiled citizens, but the march of invading foes.

“ My Lord Colonna,” said the Cardinal de Deux, a small withered man, by birth a Frenchman, and full of the bitterest prejudices against the Ro-

mans, who had in a former mission very ill received him, as was their wont with foreign ecclesiastics. “This Pepin whom Montreal has deputed at your orders, hath done us indeed good service.”

The old lord bowed, but made no answer. His strong intellect was already broken, and there was dotage in his glassy eye. The Cardinal muttered; “He hears me not; sorrow hath brought him to second childhood!” and looking back, motioned to Luca Savelli to approach.

“Luca,” said the legate, “it was fortunate that the Hungarians’ black banner detained the Provençal at Aversa. Had he entered Rome, we might have found Rienzi’s successor worse than the Tribune himself. Montreal,” he added, with a slight emphasis, and a curled lip, “is a gentleman, and a Frenchman. This Pepin, who is his delegate, we must bribe, or menace to our will.”

“Assuredly,” answered Savelli, “it is not a difficult task, for Montreal calculated on a more stubborn contest, which he himself would have found leisure to close,—”

“As Podesta, or prince of Rome! the modest man! we Frenchmen have a due sense of our own merits;

but this sudden victory surprises him as it doth us, Luca ; and we shall wrest the prey from Pepin, ere Montreal can come to his help ! But Rienzi must die. He is still, I hear, shut up in St. Angelo. The Orsini shall storm him there ere the day be much older. To-day we possess the Capitol—annul all the rebel's laws—break up his ridiculous parliament, and put all the government of the city under three senators. Rinaldo, Orsini, Colonna, and myself; you, my lord, I trust we shall fitly provide for."

" Oh ! I am rewarded enough by returning to my palace ; and a descent on the Jeweller's quarter will soon build up its fortifications. Luca Savelli is not an ambitious man. He wants but to live in peace."

The Cardinal smiled sourly, and took the turn towards the Capitol.

In the front space the usual gapers were assembled. " Make way, make way, knaves," cried the guards, trampling on either side the crowd, who, accustomed to the sedate and courteous order of Rienzi's guard, fell back too slowly for many of them to escape severe injury from the pikes of the soldiers and the hoofs of the horses.

Our friend, Luigi, the butcher, was one of these, and the surliness of the Roman blood was past boiling heat when he received in his ample stomach the blunt end of a German's pike. "There, Roman," said the rude mercenary, in his barbarous attempt at Italian, "make way for your betters; you have had enough crowds and shows of late, in all conscience."

"*Betters!*" gulped out the poor butcher; "*a Roman has no betters;* and if I had not lost two brothers by San Lorenzo I would—"

"The dog is mutinous," said one of the followers of the Orsini, succeeding the German who had passed on. "*And talks of San Lorenzo?*"

"Oh!" said another Orsinist who rode abreast, "*I remember him of old.* He was one of Rienzi's gang."

"Was he," said the other sternly, "then we cannot begin salutary examples too soon;" and, offended at something swaggering and insolent in the butcher's look, the Orsinist coolly thrust him through the heart with his pike, and rode on over his body.

"Shame! Shame!" "Murder! Murder!"

cried the crowd : and they began to press, in the passion of the moment, round the fierce guards.

The Legate heard the cry, and saw the rush : he turned pale. “ The rascals rebel again ! ” he faltered.

“ No, your Eminence, no,” said Luca ; “ but it may be as well to infuse a wholesome terror ; they are all unarmed ; let me bid the guards disperse them. A word will do it.”

The Cardinal assented ; the word was given ; and, in a few minutes, the soldiery, who still smarted under the vindictive memory of defeat from an undisciplined multitude, scattered the crowd down the streets without scruple or mercy —riding over some, spearing others—filling the air with shrieks and yells, and strewing the ground with almost as many men as a few days before would have sufficed to have guarded Rome, and preserved the constitution. Through this wild, tumultuous scene, and over the bodies of its victims, rode the Legate and his train, to receive in the Hall of the Capitol the allegiance of the citizens, and to proclaim the blessing of their return

As they dismounted at the stairs, a placard in large letters struck the eye of the Legate. It was placed upon the pedestal of the Lion of Basalt, covering the very place that had been occupied by the bull of excommunication. The words were few, and ran thus :

“TREMBLE ! RIENZI SHALL RETURN !”

“How ! what means this mummery ?” cried the Legate, trembling already, and looking round to the nobles.

“Please your Eminence,” said one of the councillors, who had come from the Capitol to meet the Legate, “we saw it at day-break, the ink yet moist, as we entered the Hall. We deemed it best to leave it for your Eminence to deal with.”

“You deemed ! Who are *you*, then ?”

“One of the members of the council, your Eminence ; and a staunch opponent of the Tribune, as is well known when he wanted the new tax ;—”

“Council—trash ! No more councils now ! Order is restored at last. The Orsini and the Colonna will look to you in future. Resist a tax, did you ? Well, that was right when proposed by a tyrant ; but *I* warn you, friend, to take care

how you resist the tax *we* shall impose. Happy if your city can buy its peace with the Church on any terms :—and his Holiness is short of the florins.”

The discomfited councillor shrank back.

“ Tear off yon insolent placard. Nay, hold ! fix over it our proclamation of ten thousand florins for the heretic’s head ! *Ten* thousand ; methinks that is too much *now*—we will alter the cipher. Meanwhile, Rinaldo Orsini, Lord Senator, march thy soldiers to St. Angelo ; let us see if the heretic can stand a siege.”

“ It needs not, your Eminence,” said the councillor, again officiously bustling up, “ St. Angelo is surrendered. The Tribune, his wife, and one page escaped last night, it is said, in disguise.”

“ Ha ! ” said the old Colonna, whose dulled sense had at length arrived at the conclusion that something extraordinary arrested the progress of his friends. “ What is the matter ? What is that placard ? Will no one tell me the words ? My old eyes are dim.”

As he uttered the questions, in the shrill and piercing treble of age, a voice replied in a loud and

deep tone—none knew whence it came; the crowd was reduced to a few stragglers, chiefly friars in cowl and serge, whose curiosity nought could daunt, and whose garb ensured them safety—the soldiers closed the rear:—a voice, I say, came, starting the colour from many a cheek—in answer to the Colonna, saying:

“ TREMBLE! RIENZI SHALL RETURN !”

BOOK VI.

THE PLAGUE.

“ Dico adunque, che già erano gli anni della fruttifera Incarnatione del Figliuolo di Dio al numero pervenuti di mille trecentoquarant'otto, quando nella egregia città di Fiorenza oltre ad ogni altra Italica bellissima, pervenne la mortifera pestilenzia.”

Boccaccio.

BOOK VI.

THE PLAGUE.

CHAPTER I.

THE RETREAT OF THE LOVER.

By the borders of one of the fairest lakes of Northern Italy, stood the favourite mansion of Adrian di Castello, to which in his softer and less patriotic moments his imagination had often and fondly turned; and hither the young noble, dismissing his more courtly and distinguished companions in his Neapolitan embassy, retired

after his ill-starred return to Rome. Most of those thus dismissed, joined the Barons; the young Annibaldi, whose daring and ambitious nature had attached him strongly to the Tribune, maintained a neutral ground; he betook himself to his castle in the Campagna, and did not return to Rome till the expulsion of Rienzi.

The retreat of Irene's lover was one well fitted to feed his melancholy reveries. Without being absolutely a fortress, it was sufficiently strong to resist any assault of the mountain robbers or petty tyrants in the vicinity; while, built by some former lord from the materials of the half-ruined villas of the ancient Romans, its marble columns and tessellated pavements relieved, with a wild grace, the grey stone walls and massive towers of feudal masonry. Rising from a green eminence, gently sloping to the lake, the stately pile cast its shadow far and dark over the beautiful waters; by its side, from the high and wooded mountains on the back-ground, broke a waterfall, in irregular and sinuous course—now hid by the foliage, now gleaming in the light, and collecting itself at last in a broad basin—beside which a little fountain, in-

scribed with half-obliterated letters, attested the departed elegance of the classic age—some memento of lord and poet whose very names were lost; thence descending through mosses and lichen, and odorous herbs—a brief, sheeted stream bore its surplus into the lake. And there, amidst the sturdier and bolder foliage of the North grew, wild and picturesque, many a tree transplanted, in ages back, from the sunnier East—not blighted nor stunted in that golden clime, which fosters almost every produce of nature as with a mother's care. The place was remote and solitary. The roads that conducted to it from the distant towns were tangled, intricate, mountainous, and beset by robbers. A few cottages and a small convent, a quarter of a league up the verdant margin, were the nearest habitations: and save by some occasional pilgrim or some bewildered traveller, the loneliness of the mansion was rarely invaded. It was precisely the spot which proffered rest to a man weary of the world, and indulged the memories which grow in rank luxuriance over the wrecks of passion. And he whose mind, at once gentle and self-dependent, can endure solitude,

might have ransacked all earth for a more fair and undisturbed retreat.

But not to such a solitude had the earlier dreams of Adrian dedicated the place. Here had he thought—should one bright being have presided—here should love have found its haven ; and hither, when love at length admitted of intrusion—hither might wealth and congenial culture have invited all the gentler and better spirits which had begun to move over the troubled face of Italy, promising a second and younger empire of poesy, and lore, and art. To the graceful and romantic, but somewhat pensive and inert, temperament of the young noble, more adapted to calm and civilised than stormy and barbarous times, ambition proffered no reward so grateful as lettered leisure and intellectual repose. His youth coloured by the influence of Petrarch, his manhood had dreamed of a happier Vaucluse not untenanted by a Laura. The visions which had connected the scene with the image of Irene, made the place still haunted by her shade : and time and absence only ministering to his impassioned meditations, deepened his melancholy and increased his love.

In this lone retreat—which even in describing from memory, for these eyes have seen, these feet have trodden, this heart yet yearneth for, the spot—which even, I say, in thus describing, seems to me (and haply also to the gentle reader) a grateful and welcome transit from the storms of action and the vicissitudes of ambition, so long engrossing the narrative ;—in this lone retreat, Adrian passed the winter, which visits with so mild a change that intoxicating clime. The roar of the world without was borne but in faint and indistinct murmurings to his ear. He learnt only imperfectly, and with many contradictions, the news which broke like a thunderbolt over Italy, that the singular and aspiring man — himself a revolution—who had excited the interest of all Europe, the brightest hopes of the enthusiastic, the profusest adulation of the great, the deepest terror of the despot—the wildest aspirations of all free spirits—had been suddenly stricken from his state — his name branded and his head proscribed. This event, which happened at the end of December, reached Adrian, through a wandering pilgrim, at the commencement of March, somewhat more than two

months after the date. The March of that awful year 1348, which saw Europe, and Italy especially, desolated by the direst pestilence which history has recorded, accursed alike by the numbers and the celebrity of its victims, and yet strangely connected with some not unpleasing images by the grace of Boccaccio and the pathetic eloquence of Petrarch.

The pilgrim who informed Adrian of the revolution at Rome was unable to give him any clue to the present fate of Rienzi or his family. It was only known that himself and wife had escaped none knew whither ; many guessed that they were already dead, victims to the numerous robbers who immediately on the fall of the Tribune settled back in their former habits, sparing neither age nor sex, wealth nor poverty. As all relating to the ex-Tribune was matter of eager interest, the pilgrim had also learnt that, previous to the fall of Rienzi, his sister had left Rome, but it was not known to what place she had been conveyed.

The news utterly roused Adrian from his dreaming life. Irene was then in the condition his letter had dared to picture—severed from her

brother, fallen from her rank, desolate and friendless. "Now," said the generous and high-hearted lover, "she may be mine without a disgrace to my name. Whatever Rienzi's faults, she is not implicated in them. Her hands are not red with my kinsmen's blood ; nor can men say that Adrian di Castello allies himself with a prince whose power is built upon the ruins of the Colonna's House. The Colonna are restored—again triumphant—Rienzi is nothing—distress and misfortune unite me at once to her on whom they fall !

But how were these romantic resolutions to be executed—Irene's dwelling-place unknown ? He resolved himself to repair to Rome and make the necessary inquiries : accordingly he summoned his retainers :—blithe tidings to them—those of travel ! The mail left the armoury—the banner the hall—and after two days of animated bustle, the fountain by which Adrian had past so many hours of reverie was haunted only by the birds of the returning spring ; and the nightly lamp no longer cast its solitary ray from his turret chamber over the bosom of the deserted lake.

CHAP. II.

THE SEEKER.

IT was a bright, oppressive, sultry morning, when a solitary horseman was seen winding that unequalled road, from whose height, amidst fig trees, vines, and olives, the traveller beholds gradually break upon his gaze the enchanting valley of the Arno, and the spires and domes of Florence. But not with the traveller's customary eye of admiration and delight passed that solitary horseman, and not upon the usual activity, and mirth, and animation of the Tuscan life, broke that noon-day sun. All was silent, void, and hushed ; and even in the light of heaven there seemed a sicklied and ghastly glare. The cottages by the road side were some shut up and closed,

some open, but seemingly inmateless. The plough stood still, the distaff plied not: horse and man had a dreary holiday. There was a darker curse upon the land than the curse of Cain! Now and then a single figure, usually clad in the gloomy robe of a friar, crossed the road, lifting towards the traveller a livid and amazed stare, and then hurried on, and vanished beneath some roof, whence issued a faint and dying moan, which but for the exceeding stillness around could scarcely have pierc'd the threshold. As the traveller neared the city, the scene became less solitary, yet more dread. There, might be seen carts and litters, thick awnings wrapt closely round them, containing those who sought safety in flight, forgetful that the Plague was everywhere! And, as these gloomy vehicles, conducted by horses, gaunt, shadowy skeletons, crawling heavily along, passed by, like hearses of the dead, sometimes a cry burst the silence in which they moved, and the traveller's steed started aside, as some wretch, on whom the disease had broke forth, was dropped from the vehicle by the selfish inhumanity of his comrades, and left to perish by the way. Hard by the gate a wagon paused, and a

man with a mask threw out its contents in a green slimy ditch that bordered the road. These were garments and robes of all kind and value; the broidered mantle of the gallant, the hood and veil of my lady, and the rags of the peasant. While glancing at the labour of the masker, the cavalier beheld a herd of swine, gaunt and half famished, run to the spot in the hopes of food, and the traveller shuddered to think *what* food they might have anticipated! But ere he reached the gate, those of the animals that had been busiest rooting at the infectious heap, dropped down dead amongst their fellows *.

“ Ho, ho,” said the masker, and his hollow voice sounded yet more hollow through his vizard,— “ comest thou here to die, stranger? See, thy brave mantle of triple-pile and golden broidery will not save thee from the gavocciolo †. Ride on, ride on;—to-day fit morsel for thy lady’s kiss, to-morrow too foul for the rat and worm!”

Replying not to this hideous welcome, Adrian, for it was he, pursued his way. The gates

* The same spectacle greeted, and is recorded by, Boccaccio.

† The tumour that made the fatal symptom.

stood wide open ; this was the most appalling sign of all, for, at first, the most jealous precaution had been taken against the ingress of strangers. Now all care, all foresight, all vigilance, were vain. And thrice nine warders had died at that single post, and the officers to appoint their successors were dead too ! Law and Police, and the Tribunals of Health, and the Boards of Safety, Death had stopped them all ! And the Plague killed art itself, social union, the harmony and mechanism of civilisation, as if they had been bone and flesh !

So, mute and solitary, went on the lover, in his quest of love, resolved to find and to save his betrothed, and guided (that faithful and loyal knight !) through that wilderness of horrors by the blessed hope of that strange passion, noblest of all when noble, basest of all when base ! He came into a broad and spacious square lined with palaces, the usual haunt of the best and most graceful nobility of Italy. The stranger was alone now, and the tramp of his gallant steed sounded ghastly and fearful in his own ears, when just as he turned the corner of one of the streets that led from it, he saw a woman steal forth with a child in her arms, while

another, yet in infancy, clung to her robe. She held a large bunch of flowers to her nostrils (the fancied and favourite mode to prevent infection), and muttered to the children, who were moaning with hunger,—“ Yes, yes, you shall have food ! Plenty of food now for the stirring forth. But oh, *that stirring forth!*”—and she peered about and round, lest any of the diseased might be near,—Adrian paused.

“ My friend,” said he, “ can you direct me to the convent of ——”

“ Away, man, away !” shrieked the woman.

“ Alas !” said Adrian, with a mournful smile, “ can you not see that I am not, as yet, one to spread contagion ? ”

But the woman, unheeding him, fled on ; when, after a few paces, she was arrested by the child that clung to her.

“ Mother, mother !” it cried, “ I am sick—I cannot stir.”

The woman halted, tore aside the child’s robe, saw under the arm the fatal tumour, and, deserting her own flesh, fled with a shriek along the square. The shriek rang long in Adrian’s ears, though not

aware of the unnatural cause;—the mother feared not for her infant, but herself. The voice of nature was no more heeded in that charnel city than it is in the tomb itself! Adrian rode on at a brisker pace, and came at length before a stately church; its doors were wide open, and he saw within a company of monks (the church had no other worshippers, and they were masked,) gathered round the altar, and chaunting the *Miserere Domine*:—the ministers of God, in a city hitherto boasting the devoutest population in Italy, without a flock!

The young cavalier paused before the door, and waited till the service was done, and the monks descended the steps into the street.

“Holy fathers,” said he then, “may I pray your goodness to tell me my nearest way to the convent Santa Maria dei Pazzi?”

“Son,” said one of these featureless spectres, for so they seemed in their shroud-like robes and uncouth wizards; “son, pass on your way, and God be with you. Robbers or revellers may now fill the holy cloisters you speak of. The abbess is dead; and many a sister sleeps with her. And the nuns have fled from the contagion.”

Adrian half fell from his horse, and, as he still remained rooted to the spot, the dark procession swept on, hymning in solemn dirge through the desolate street the monastic chaunt—

“ By the Mother and the Son,
Death endured and mercy won :
Spare us, sinners though we be ;
Miserere Domine !”

Recovering from his stupor, Adrian regained the brethren, and, as they closed the burthen of their song, again accosted them.

“ Holy fathers, dismiss me not thus. Perchance the one I seek may yet be heard of at the convent. Tell me which way to shape my course.”

“ Disturb us not, son,” said the monk who spoke before. “ It is an ill omen for thee to break thus upon the invocations of the ministers of heaven.”

“ Pardon, pardon. I will do ample penance, pay many masses ; but I seek a dear friend—the way—the way——”

“ To the right, till you gain the first bridge. Beyond the third bridge, on the river side, you will

find the convent," said another monk, moved by the earnestness of Adrian.

"Bless you, holy father," faltered forth the cavalier, and spurred his steed in the direction given. The friars heeded him not, but again resumed their dirge. Mingled with the sound of his horse's hoofs on the clattering pavement, came to the rider's ear the imploring line—

"Miserere Domine!"

Impatient, sick at heart, desperate, Adrian flew through the streets at the full speed of his horse. He passed the market-place—it was empty as the desert;—the gloomy and barricadoed streets, in which the counter cries of Guelf and Ghibeline had so often cheered on the Chivalry and Rank of Florence. Now huddled together in vault and pit, lay Guelf and Ghibeline, knightly spurs and beggar's crutch. To that silence the roar even of civil strife would have been a blessing! The first bridge, the river side, the second, the third bridge, all were gained, and Adrian at last reined his steed before the walls of the convent. He fastened his steed to the porch, in which the door

stood ajar, half torn from its hinges, traversed the court, gained the opposite door that admitted to the main building, came to the jealous grating, now no more a barrier from the profane world, and as he there paused a moment to recover breath and nerve, wild laughter and loud song, interrupted and mixed with oaths, startled his ear. He pushed aside the grated door, entered, and, led by the sounds, came to the refectory. In that meeting-place of the severe and mortified maids of heaven, he now beheld gathered round the upper table, used of yore by the abbess, a strange disorderly ruffian herd, who at first glance seemed indeed of all ranks, for some wore serge, or even rags, others were tricked out in all the bravery of satin and velvet, plume and mantle. But a second glance sufficed to indicate that the companions were much of the same degree, and that the finery of the more showy was but the spoil rent from unguarded palaces or tenantless bazaars: for under plumed hats, looped with jewels, were grim, unwashed, unshaven faces, over which hung the long locks which the professed brethren of the sharp knife and hireling arm had just begun to assume, serving them often instead of a mask. Amidst these savage revellers were many women, young and mid-

dle-aged, foul and fair, and Adrian piously shuddered to see amongst the loose robes and uncovered necks of the professional harlots the saintly habit and beaded rosary of nuns. Flasks of wine, ample viands, gold and silver vessels, mostly consecrated to holy rites, strewed the board. As the young Roman paused spell-bound at the threshold, the man who acted as president of the revel, a huge swarthy Russian with a deep scar over his face, which, traversing the whole of the left cheek and upper lip, gave his large features an aspect preternaturally hideous, called out to him—

“ Come in, man, come in. What stand you there for, amazed and dumb? We are hospitable revellers, and give all men welcome. Here are wine, food, and women. My Lord Bishop’s wine and my Lady Abbess’s women!

“ Sing hey, sing ho, for the royal DEATH,
That scatters a host with a single breath ;
That opens the prison to spoil the palace,
And rids honest necks from the hangman’s malice.
Here’s a health to the Plague! Let the mighty ones
dread,
The poor never lived till the wealthy were dead.

A health to the Plague ! may She ever as now
Loose the rogue from his chain and the nun from her
vow :

To the gaoler a sword, to the captive a key,
Hurrah for Earth's Curse—'tis a blessing to me !"

Ere this fearful stave was concluded, Adrian, sensible that in such orgies there was no chance of prosecuting his inquiries, left the desecrated chamber and fled, scarcely drawing breath, so great was the terror that seized him, till he stood once more in the court amidst the hot, sickly, stagnant sunlight, that seemed a fit atmosphere for the scenes on which it fell. He resolved however not to desert the place without making another effort at inquiry ; and while he stood without the court, musing and doubtful, he saw a small chapel hard by, through whose long casement gleamed faintly, and dimmed by the noon-day, the light of tapers. He turned towards its porch, entered, and saw beside the sanctuary a single nun kneeling in prayer. In the narrow aisle, upon a long table, (at either end of which burned the tall dismal tapers whose rays had attracted him), the drapery of several shrouds showed him the half distinct outline of human

figures hushed in death. Adrian himself, impressed by the sadness and sanctity of the place, and the touching sight of that solitary and unselfish watcher of the dead, knelt down and intensely prayed.

As he rose, somewhat relieved from the burthen at his heart, the nun rose also, and started to perceive him.

“Unhappy man!” said she, in a voice which, low, faint, and solemn, sounded as a ghost’s—“what fatality brings thee hither? Seest thou not thou art in the presence of clay which the Plague hath touched—thou breathest the air which destroys! Hence! and seek throughout all the desolation for one spot where the Dark Visiter hath not come!”

“Holy maiden,” answered Adrian, “the danger you hazard does not appal me;—I seek one whose life is dearer to me than my own.”

“Thou needest say no more to tell me thou art newly come to Florence! Here son forsakes his father, and mother deserts her child. When life is most hopeless, these worms of a day cling to it as if it were the salvation of immortality! But for me alone, death has no horror. Long severed from the world, I have seen my sisterhood perish—the

house of God desecrated — its altar overthrown, and I care not to survive the last whom the Pestilence leaves at once unperjured and alive."

The nun paused a few moments, and then, looking earnestly at the healthful countenance and unbroken frame of Adrian, sighed heavily—“Stranger, why fly you not?” she said. “Thou mightst as well search the crowded vaults and rotten corruption of the dead, as search the city for one living.”

“Sister, and bride of the blessed Redeemer!” returned the Roman, clasping his hands—“one word, I implore thee. Thou art, methinks, of the sisterhood of yon dismantled convent;—tell me, knowest thou if Irene di Gabrini *,—guest of the late Abbess, sister of the fallen Tribune of Rome,—be yet amongst the living?”

“Art thou her brother, then?” said the nun.
“Art thou that fallen Son of the Morning?”

“I am her betrothed,” replied Adrian, sadly.
“Speak!”

“Oh, flesh! flesh! how art thou victor to the last, even amidst the triumphs and in the lazars—

* The family name of Rienzi was Gabrin'.

house of Corruption !” said the nun. “ Vain man ! think not of such carnal ties ; make thy peace with Heaven, for thy days are surely numbered ! ”

“ Woman ! ” cried Adrian, impatiently—“ talk not to me of myself, nor rail against ties whose holiness thou canst not know. I ask thee again, as thou thyself hopest for mercy and for pardon—is Irene living ? ”

The nun was awed by the energy of the young lover, and after a moment, which seemed to him an age of agonised suspense, she replied—

“ The maiden thou speakest of died not with the general death. In the dispersion of the few remaining, she left the convent—I know not whither; but she had friends in Florence—their names I cannot tell thee.”

“ Now bless thee, holy sister ! bless thee ! How long since she left the convent ? ”

“ Four days have passed since the robber and the harlot have seized the house of Santa Maria,” replied the nun, groaning ; “ and they were quick successors to the sisterhood.”

“ Four days ! — and thou canst give me no clue ? ”

"None—yet stay, young man!"—and the nun, approaching, lowered her voice to a hissing whisper—"Ask the *Becchini* *."

Adrian started aside, crossed himself hastily, and quitted the convent without answer. He returned to his horse, and rode back into the silenced heart of the city. Tavern and hotel there were no more; but the palaces of the dead were held in common by the living. He entered one—a spacious and princely mansion. In the stables he found forage still in the manger; but the horses, at that time in the Italian cities a proof of rank as well as wealth, were gone with the hands that fed them. The high-born knight assumed the office of groom, took off the heavy harness, fastened his steed to the rack, and as the wearied animal, unconscious of the surrounding horrors, fell eagerly upon its meal, its young lord turned away, and muttered,

* According to the usual customs of Florence the dead were borne to their resting-place on biers, supported by citizens of equal rank; but a new trade was created by the plague, and men of the lowest dregs of the populace, bribed by immense payment, discharged the office of transporting the remains of the victims. These were called *Becchini*.

“ Faithful servant, and sole companion ! may the pestilence that spareth neither beast nor man, spare thee ! and mayst thou bear me hence with a lighter heart !”

A spacious hall, hung with arms and banners — a wide and marble flight of stairs, whose walls were painted in the stiff outlines and gorgeous colours of the day, conducted to vast chambers, hung with velvets and cloth of gold, but silent as the tomb. He threw himself upon the cushions which were piled in the centre of the room, for he had ridden far that morning, and for many days before, and he was wearied and exhausted, body and limb ; but he could not rest. Impatience, anxiety, hope, and fear gnawed his heart and fevered his veins, and after a brief and unsatisfactory attempt to sober his own thoughts, and devise some plan of search more certain than that which chance might afford him, he rose, and traversed the apartments, in the unacknowledged hope which chance alone could suggest.

It was easy to see that he had made his resting-place in the home of one of the princes of the land;

and the splendour of all around him far outshone the barbarous and rude magnificence of the less civilised and wealthy Romans. Here lay the lute as last touched—the gilded and illumined volume as last conned ; there, were seats drawn familiarly together, as when lady and gallant had interchanged whispers last.

“ And such,” thought Adrian, “ such desolation may soon swallow up the vestige of the unwelcomed guest, as of the vanished lord.”

At length he entered a saloon, in which was a table still spread with wine-flasks, goblets of glass, and one of silver, withered flowers, half-mouldy fruits, and viands. At one side the arras, folding-doors opened to a broad flight of stairs that descended to a little garden at the back of the house, in which a fountain still played sparkling and livingly—the only thing, save the stranger, living there! On the steps lay a crimson mantle, and by it a lady’s glove. The relics seemed to speak to the lover’s heart of a lover’s last wooing and last farewell. He groaned aloud, and feeling he should have need of all his strength, filled one of the goblets from a half-emptied flask of Cyprus wine. He drained

the draught—it revived him. “Now,” he said, “once more to my task!—I will sally forth,” when suddenly he heard heavy steps along the rooms he had quitted—they approached—they entered; and Adrian beheld two huge and ill-omened forms stalk into the chamber. They were wrapt in black homely draperies, only their arms were bare, and they wore large shapeless masks, which descended to the breast, leaving only access to sight and breath in three small and circular apertures. The Colonna half drew his sword, for the forms and aspect of these visitors were not such as men think to look upon in safety.

“Oh!” said one, “the palace has a new guest to-day. Fear us not, stranger; there is room, aye, and wealth enough for all men now in Florence! Deh! but there is still one goblet of silver left—how comes that?” So saying, the man seized the cup which Adrian had just drained, and thrust it into his breast. He then turned to Adrian, whose hand was still upon his hilt, and said, with a laugh which came choked and muffled through his vizard—“Oh, we cut no throats, Signor; the Invisible spares us that trouble. We are honest men, state

officers, and come but to see if the cart should halt here to-night."

"Ye are then—"

"Becchini!"

Adrian's blood ran cold. The Becchino continued—"And keep you this house while you rest at Florence, Signor."

"Yes, if the rightful lord claim it not."

"Ha! ha! 'Rightful lord!' The Plague is Lord of all now! Why, I have known three gallant companies tenant this palace the last week, and have buried them all—all! It is a pleasant house enough, and gives good custom. Are ye alone?"

"At present, yes."

"Show us where you sleep, that we may know where to come for you. You won't want us these three days, I see."

"Ye are pleasant welcomers!" said Adrian;—"but listen to me. Can ye find the living as well as bury the dead? I seek one in this city who, if you discover her, shall be worth to you a year of burials!"

"No, no! that is out of our line. As well look for a dropped sand on the beach, as for a living

being amongst closed houses and yawning vaults ; but if you will pay the poor grave-diggers beforehand, I promise you you shall have the first of a new charnel-house ;—it will be finished just about your time.”

“ There ! ” said Adrian, flinging the wretches a few pieces of gold—“ there ! and if you would do me a kinder service, leave me, at least while living ; or I may save you that trouble”—and he left the room.

The Becchino who had been spokesman followed him. “ You are generous, Signor, stay ; you will want fresher food than these filthy fragments. I will supply thee of the best, while—while thou wantest it. And hark,—whom wishest thou that I should seek ? ”

This question arrested Adrian’s departure. He detailed the name, and all the particulars he could suggest of Irene ; and, with sickened heart, described the hair, features, and stature of that lovely and hallowed image, which might furnish a theme to the poet, and now a clue to the grave-digger.

The unhallowed apparition shook his head when Adrian had concluded. “ Full five hundred such

descriptions did I hear in the first days of the Plague, when there were still such things as mistress and lover ; but it is a dainty catalogue, Signor, and it will be a pride to the poor Becchino to discover, or even to bury, so many charms ! I will do my best ; meanwhile, I can recommend you, if in a hurry to make the best of your time, to many a pretty face and comely shape——.”

“ Out, fiend ! ” muttered Adrian, “ fool to waste time with such as thou.”

The laugh of the grave-digger followed his steps.

All that day did Adrian wander through the city, but search and question were alike unavailing ; all whom he encountered and interrogated seemed to regard him as a madman, and these were indeed of no kind likely to advance his object. Wild troops of disordered, drunken revellers, processions of monks, or, here and there, scattered individuals gliding rapidly along, and shunning all approach or speech, made the only hauntings of the dismal streets, till the sun sunk lurid and yellow, behind the hills, and Darkness closed around the unresting and noiseless pathway of the Pestilence.

CHAP. III.

THE FLOWERS AMIDST THE TOMBS.

ADRIAN found that the Becchini had taken care that famine should not forestall the plague; the banquet of the dead was removed, and fresh viands and wines of all kinds,—for there was plenty then in Florence!—spread the table. He partook of the refreshment, though but sparingly, and shrinking from repose in beds beneath whose gorgeous hangings death had been so lately busy, carefully closed door and window, wrapped himself in his mantle, and found his resting-place on the cushions of the chamber in which he had supped. Fatigue cast him into an unquiet slumber, from which he was suddenly wakened by the roll of a cart below, and

the jingle of bells. He listened, as the cart proceeded slowly from door to door, and at length its sound died away in the distance.—He slept no more that night !

The sun had not long risen ere he renewed his labours ; and it was yet early when, just as he passed a church, two ladies richly dressed came from the porch, and seemed through their visards to regard the young cavalier with earnest attention. The gaze arrested him also, when one of the ladies said “ Fair sir, you are over bold, you wear no mask ; neither do you smell to flowers.”

“ Lady, I wear no mask, for I would be seen : I search these miserable places for one whom to lose is to lose life.”

“ He is young, comely, evidently noble, and the plague hath not touched him : he will serve our purpose well,” whispered one of the ladies to the other.

“ You echo my own thoughts,” returned her companion ; and then turning to Adrian, she said, “ you seek one you are not wedded to if you seek so fondly.”

“ It is true.”

“ Young and fair, with dark hair and a neck of snow ; I will conduct you to her.”

“ Signora !”

“ Follow us !”

“ Know you whom I am, and whom I seek ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Can you in truth tell me aught of Irene ?”

“ I can — follow me.”

“ To her !”

“ Yes, yes, follow us !”

The ladies moved on as if impatient of farther parley. Amazed, doubtful, and as if in a dream, Adrian followed them. Their dress, manner, and the pure Tuscan of the one who had addressed him indicated them of birth and station ; but all else was a riddle which he could not solve.

They arrived at one of the bridges, where a litter and a servant on horseback holding a palfrey by the bridle were in attendance. The ladies entered the litter, and she who had before spoken bade Adrian follow on the palfrey.

“ But tell me,” he began.

“ No questions, cavalier,” said she, impatiently, “ follow the living in silence, or remain with the dead, as you list.”

With that the litter proceeded, and Adrian mounted the palfrey wonderingly, and followed his strange conductors, who moved on at a tolerably brisk pace. They crossed the bridge, left the river on one side, and, soon ascending a gentle acclivity, the trees and flowers of the country began to succeed dull walls and empty streets. After proceeding thus somewhat less than half an hour they turned up a green lane remote from the road, and came suddenly upon the porticos of a fair and stately palace. Here the ladies descended from their litter ; and Adrian, who had vainly sought to extract speech from the attendant, also dismounted, and following them across a spacious court filled on either side with vases of flowers and orange trees, and then through a wide hall in the farther side of the quadrangle, found himself in one of the loveliest spots eye ever saw or poet ever sung. It was a garden plot of the greenest and most emerald verdure, bosquets of laurel and of myrtle opened on either side into vistas half overhung with clematis and rose, and through whose arcades the prospect closed with alternated statues and gushing fountains ; in front the lawn was bounded by rows of vases on marble pedestals filled with flowers ;

and broad and gradual flights of steps of the whitest marble led from terrace to terrace, each adorned with statues and fountains, half way down a high but softly sloping and verdant hill. Beyond, spread in wide, various, and luxurious landscape, the vineyards and olive groves, the villas and villages of the vale of Arno, intersected by the silver river, while the city, in all its calm, but without its horror, raised its roofs and spires to the sun. Birds of every hue and song, some free, some in net-work of golden wire, warbled round ; and upon the centre of the sward reclined four ladies unmasked and richly dressed, the eldest of whom seemed scarcely more than twenty, and five cavaliers, young and handsome, whose jewelled vests and golden chains attested their degree. Wines and fruits were on a low table beside ; and musical instruments, chess-boards, and gammon-tables lay scattered all about. So fair a group and so graceful a scene Adrian never beheld but once, and that was in the midst of the ghastly pestilence of Italy !—such group and such scene our closet indolence may yet revive in the pages of the bright Boccaccio !

On seeing Adrian and his companions approach, the party rose instantly ; and one of the ladies, who wore upon her head a wreath of laurel leaves, stepping before the rest, exclaimed, “ Well done, my Mariana ! welcome back, my fair subjects ; and you, sir, welcome hither.”

The two guides of the Colonna had by this time removed their masks ; and the one who had accosted him, shaking her long and raven ringlets over a bright laughing eye and a cheek to whose native olive now rose a slight blush, turned to him ere he could reply to the welcome he had received.

“ Signor Cavalier,” said she, “ you now see to what I have decoyed you. Own that this is pleasanter than the sights and sounds of the city we have left. You gaze on me in surprise. See, my queen, how speechless the marvel of your court has made our new gallant ; I assure you he could talk quickly enough when he had only us to confer with : nay, I was forced to impose silence on him.”

“ Oh ! then you have not yet informed him of the custom and origin of the court he enters,” quoth she of the laurel wreath.

“ No, my Queen ; I thought all description given in such a spot as our poor Florence now is

would fail of its object. My task is done, I resign him to your Grace!"

So saying the lady tripped lightly away, and began coquettishly sleeking her locks in the smooth mirror of a marble basin, whose waters trickled over the margin upon the grass below, ever and anon glancing archly towards the stranger, and sufficiently at hand to overhear all that was said.

"In the first place, Signor, permit us to inquire," said the lady who bore the appellation of queen, "thy name, rank, and birth-place."

"Madam," returned Adrian, "I came hither little dreaming to answer questions respecting myself: but what it pleases you to ask it must please me to reply to; my name is Adrian di Castello, one of the Roman house of the Colonna."

"A noble column of a noble house!" answered the Queen; "for us, respecting whom your curiosity may perhaps be aroused, know that we six ladies of Florence, deserted by, or deprived of, our kin and protectors, formed the resolution to retire to this palace; where, if death comes, it comes stripped of half its horrors; and as the learned tell us that sadness engenders the awful malady, so you see us

sworn foes to sadness. Six cavaliers of our acquaintance agreed to join us. We pass our days, whether many or few, in such diversions as we could find with nature and our own resources. Music and the dance, merry tales, and lively songs, with such slight change of scene as from sward to shade, from alley to fountain, fill up our time, and prepare us for peaceful sleep and happy dreams. Each lady is by turns queen of our fairy court, as is my lot this day. One law forms the code of our constitution—that nothing sad shall be admitted. We would live as if yonder city were not, and as if (added the fair Queen with a slight sigh) youth, grace, and beauty could endure for ever. One of our knights madly left us for a day, promising to return; we have seen him no more; we will not guess what hath chanced to him. It became necessary to fill up his place; we drew lots who should seek his substitute, it fell upon the ladies who have—not I trust to your displeasure—brought you hither. Fair sir, my explanation is made."

"Alas, lovely Queen," said Adrian, wrestling strongly but vainly with the bitter disappointment he felt—"I cannot be one of your happy circle—

I am in myself a violation of your law. I am filled with but one sad and anxious thought to which all mirth would seem impiety. I am a seeker amongst the living and the dead, for one being, of whose fate I am uncertain. And it was only from the words that fell from my fair conductor, that I have been decoyed hither from my mournful task. Suffer me, gracious lady, to return to Florence."

The queen looked in mute vexation towards the dark eyed Mariana, who returned the glance by one equally expressive, and then suddenly stepping up to Adrian she said—

"But, Signor, if I should still keep my promise, if I should be able to satisfy thee of the health and safety of—of Irene."

"Irene!" echoed Adrian in surprise, forgetful at the moment that he had before revealed the name of her he sought—"Irene, Irene di Gabrini, sister of the once renowned Rienzi."

"The same," replied Mariana quickly, "I knew her, as I told you. Nay, Signor, I do not deceive thee. It is true that I cannot bring thee to her; but better as it is,—she went away many days ago

to one of the towns of Lombardy, which, they say, the scourge has not yet pierced. Now, noble sir, is not your heart lightened? and will you so soon be a deserter from the Court of Loveliness; and, perhaps," she added with a soft look from her large dark eyes, "of Love?"

"Dare I in truth believe you, lady?" said Adrian, all delighted, yet still half doubting.

"Would I deceive a true lover, as methinks you are? Be assured. Nay, I pray thee, Queen, receive your subject."

The Queen extended her hand to Adrian and led him to the group that still stood on the grass at a little distance. They welcomed him as a brother, and soon forgave his abstracted courtesies, in compliment to his good mien and illustrious name.

The Queen clapped her hands, and the party again ranged themselves on the sward. Each lady beside each gallant. "You Mariana, if not fatigued," said the Queen, "shall take the lute and silence these noisy grasshoppers, which chirp about us with as much pretension as if they were night-

ingales. Sing, sweet subject, sing ; and let it be the song our dear friend Signor Visdomini* made for a kind of inaugural anthem to such as we admitted to our court."

Mariana, who had reclined herself by the side of Adrian, took up the lute, and, after a short prelude, sung the words thus imperfectly translated.

THE SONG OF THE FLORENTINE LADY.

Enjoy the more the smiles of noon
If doubtful be the morrow,
And know the Fort of Life is soon
Betray'd to Death by Sorrow !

Death claims us all—then, Grief, away !
We'll own no meaner master ;
The clouds that darken round the day
But bring the night the faster.

* I know not if this be the same Visdomini who three years afterwards, with one of the Medici, conducted so gallant a reinforcement to Scarperia, then besieged by Visconti d'Oleggio.

Love—feast—be merry while on earth,
Such Grave should be thy moral!
Ev'n Death himself is friends with Mirth,
And veils the tomb with laurel *.

While gazing on the eyes I love
New life to mine is given—
If joy the lot of Saints above,
Joy fits us best for Heaven.

To this song, which was much applauded, succeeded those light and witty tales in which the Italian novelists furnished Voltaire and Marmontel with a model—each, in his or her turn, taking up the discourse, and with an equal dexterity avoiding every lugubrious image or mournful reflection that might remind those graceful idlers of the vicinity of death. At any other time the temper and accomplishments of the young lord di Castello would have fitted him to enjoy and to shine in that Arcadian court. But now he in vain sought to

* At that time, in Italy, the laurel was frequently planted over the dead.

dispel the gloom from his brow and the anxious thought from his heart. He revolved the intelligence he had received, wondered, guessed, hoped, and dreaded still; and if for a moment his mind returned to the scene about him, his nature, too truly poetical for the false sentiment of the place, asked itself in what save the polished exterior and the graceful circumstance, the mirth that he now so reluctantly witnessed differed from the brutal revels in the convent of Santa Maria—each alike in its motive, though so differing in the manner—equally callous and equally selfish, coining horror into enjoyment. The fair Mariana, whose partner had been reft from her as the Queen had related, was in no mind to lose the new one she had gained. She pressed upon him from time to time the wine-flask and the fruits; and in those unmeaning courtesies her hand gently lingered upon his. At length the hour arrived when the companions retired to the Palace, during the fiercer heats of noon—to come forth again in the declining sun, to sup by the side of the fountain, to dance, to sing, and to make merry by torchlight and the stars till the hour of rest. But Adrian, not willing to

continue the entertainment, no sooner found himself in the apartment to which he was conducted, than he resolved to effect a silent escape, as under all circumstances the shortest, and not perhaps the least courteous, farewell left to him. Accordingly, when all seemed quiet and hushed in the repose common to the inhabitants of the south during that hour, he left his apartment—descended the stairs—passed the outer court, and was already at the gate, when he heard himself called by a voice that spake vexation and alarm. He turned to behold Mariana.

“ Why, how now, Signor di Castello, is our company so unpleasing, is our music so jarring or our brows so wrinkled, that you should fly as the traveller flies from the witches he surprises at Benevento? Nay, you cannot mean to leave us yet?”

“ Fair dame,” returned the cavalier, somewhat disconcerted, “ it is in vain that I seek to rally my mournful spirits or to fit myself for the court, to which nothing sad should come. Your laws hang about me like a culprit—better timely flight than harsh expulsion.”

As he spoke he moved on, and would have passed the gate, but Mariana caught his arm.

“ Nay,” said she, softly, “ are there no eyes of dark light, and no neck of wintry snow, that can compensate to thee for the absent one? Tarry and forget, as doubtless in absence even *thou* art forgotten !”

It is not for us to determine whether Adrian di Castello, true lover and loyal as he was, might at all times be insensible to the charms of others than Irene; for man—and the truth may as well be spoken—may have deep fidelity at his heart, and yet not be possessed, at all hours and against all temptations, of the rigid virtue of the exemplary Joseph, that male Susannah (but then, by the way, it was the *elders* that tempted *her*, and many even of our inconstant sex might have been Susan-naish under a similar trial!) Nor did the tender and devoted Petrarch, tenderest and most devoted of all lovers and sonneteers, deem that the faith of the heart was impaired by the grosser aberration of the flesh, seeing that he diversified the intensity of his chaste and ill-fated passion, by producing, from time to time, little grand-children to his re-

spected sire. Neither, I say, arrogating nor denying to the young Roman the all-immaculate purity of an Amadis, nor entering into those philosophical mysteries which separate the Eros from the Anteros, reserved for our privileged and sagacious sex, and neither to be divulged nor (Heaven forbid !) to be shared by the daughters of Eve, it is yet certain that at that time the advances of the gentle Mariana met with no gracious return. The terrors of the charnel-house still clung to Adrian's imagination, and the thought of the *stranger woman* seemed a revolting and unnatural intrusion upon the awful and solemn meditations proper to the time.

"Lady," he therefore answered with great gravity, not unmixed with an ill-suppressed disdain, "I have not sojourned long enough amidst the sights and sounds of woe, to blunt my heart and spirit into callousness to all around. Enjoy if thou canst, and gather the rank roses of the sepulchre ; but to me, haunted still by funereal images, Beauty fails to bring delight, and Love—even *holy* love—seems darkened by the Shadow of Death. Pardon me, and farewell."

"Go, then," said the Florentine, stung and

enraged at his coldness; “go and find your mistress amidst the associations on which it pleases your philosophy to dwell. I did but deceive thee, blind fool, as I had hoped for thine own good, when I told thee Irene (was that her name?) was gone from Florence. Of her I know nought, and heard nought, save from thee. Go back—and search the vault—and see whether thou lovest her still !”

CHAP. IV.

WE OBTAIN WHAT WE SEEK, AND KNOW IT NOT.

IN the fiercest heat of the day, and on foot, Adrian proceeded back to Florence. As he approached the city, all that festive and gallant scene he had quitted seemed to him like a dream; a vision of the gardens and bowers of an enchantress, from which he woke abruptly, as a criminal might wake on the morning of his doom to see the scaffold and the deathsman;—so much did each silent and lonely step into the funereal city bring back his bewildered thoughts at once to life and to death. The parting words of Mariana sounded like a knell at his heart. And now as he paced on—the heat of the day, the lurid atmosphere, long fatigue, alternate exhaustion and excitement, combining with

the sickness of disappointment, the fretting consciousness of precious moments irretrievably lost, and his utter despair of forming any systematic mode of search—fever began rapidly to burn through his veins. His temples felt oppressed as with the weight of a mountain; his lips parched with intolerable thirst; his strength seemed suddenly to desert him; and it was with pain and labour that he dragged one languid limb after the other.

“I feel it,” thought he, with the loathing nausea, and shivering dread with which nature struggles ever against death, and now recoiled from such death—“I feel it upon me—the Devouring and the Viewless—I shall perish—and without saving her—nor shall even one grave contain us!”

But these thoughts served rapidly to augment the disease which began to prey upon him: and ere he reached the interior of the city, even thought itself forsook him. The images of men and houses grew indistinct and shadowy before his eyes; the burning pavement became unsteady and reeling beneath his feet; delirium gathered over him, and he went on his way muttering broken and incoherent words; the few who met fled from him in dis-

may. Even the monks still continuing their solemn and sad processions, passed with a murmured *bene vobis* to the other side from that on which his steps swerved and faltered. And from a booth at the corner of a street, four Becchini, drinking together, fixed upon him from their black masks the gaze that vultures fix upon some dying wanderer of the desert. Still he crept on, stretching out his arms like a man in the dark, and seeking with the vague sense that yet struggled through the closing delirium, to find out the mansion in which he had fixed his home—though many as fair to live, and as meet to die in, stood with open portals before and beside his path.

“ Irene, Irene !” he cried, sometimes in a muttered and low tone, sometimes in a wild and piercing shriek—“ where art thou ? where ? I come to snatch thee from them, they shall not have thee, the foul and ugly fiends ! pah ! how the air smells of dead flesh ! Irene, Irene, we will away to mine own palace and the heavenly lake—Irene !”

While thus benighted, and thus exclaiming, two females suddenly emerged from a neighbouring house, masked and mantled.

“Vain wisdom!” said the taller and slighter of the two, whose mantle, it is here necessary to observe, was of a deep blue, richly broidered with silver, of a shape and a colour not common in Florence, but usual in Rome, where the dress of ladies of the higher rank was singularly bright in hue, and ample in fold—thus differing from the simpler and more slender draperies of the Tuscan fashion—“Vain wisdom, to fly a relentless and certain doom!”

“Why, thou wouldst not have us hold the same home with three of the dead in the next chamber—strangers too to us—when Florence has so many empty halls? Trust me, we shall not walk far ere we suit ourselves with a safer lodgment.”

“Hitherto, indeed, we have been miraculously preserved,” sighed the other, whose voice and shape were those of extreme youth—“yet would that we knew where to fly—what mount, what wood, what cavern, held my brother and his faithful Nina! I am sick with horrors!”

“Irene, Irene! Well then, if thou art at Milan or some Lombard town, why do I linger here? To

horse, to horse ! Oh no ! no !—not the horse with the bells ! not the death cart.” With a cry, a shriek, louder than the loudest of the sick man’s, broke that young female away from her companion. It seemed as if a single step took her to the side of Adrian. She caught his arm—she looked in his face—she met his unconscious eyes bright with a fearful fire—“It has seized him !”—(she then said in a deep but calm tone)—“the plague !”

“ Away, away, are you mad ? ” cried her companion—“ hence, hence,—touch me not now thou hast touched him—go ! here we part ! ”

“ Help me to bear him somewhere ; see, he faints, he droops, he falls—help me, dear Signora, for pity, for the love of God.”

But, wholly possessed by the selfish fear which overcame all humanity in that miserable time, the elder woman, though naturally kind, pitiful, and benevolent, fled rapidly away, and soon vanished. Thus left alone with Adrian, who had now, in the fierceness of the fever that preyed within him, fallen on the ground, the strength and nerve of that young girl did not forsake her. She tore off the heavy mantle which encumbered her arms, and

cast it from her; and then, lifting up the face of her lover—for who but Irene was that weak woman, thus shrinking not from the contagion of death—she supported him on her breast, and called aloud and again for help. At length the Becchini, in the booth before noticed, (hardened in their profession, and who, thus hardened, better than the most cautious, escaped the pestilence,) lazily approached—“Quicker, quicker, for Christ’s love,” said Irene ; “ I have much gold ; I will reward you well : help me to bear him under the nearest roof.”

“ Leave him to us, young lady ; we have had our eye upon him,” said one of the grave-diggers. “ We’ll do our duty by him, first and last.”

“ No—no ! touch not his head—that is my care. There, I will help you ; so,—now then,—but be gentle !”

Assisted by these portentous officers, Irene, who would not release her hold, but seemed to watch over the beloved eyes and lips, (set and closed as they were,) as if to look back the soul from parting, bore Adrian into a neighbouring house, and laid him on a bed ; from which Irene (preserving as only women do, in such times, the presence of mind and

vigilant providence which make so sublime a contrast with their keen susceptibilities) caused them first to cast off the draperies and clothing, which might retain additional infection. She then despatched them for new furniture, and for whatsoever leech money might yet bribe to a duty, now chiefly abandoned to those heroic Brotherhoods who, however vilified in modern judgment by the crimes of some unworthy members, were yet, in the dark times, the best, the bravest, and the holiest agents, to whom God ever delegated the power to resist the oppressor—to feed the hungry—to minister to woe; and who, alone, amidst that fiery Pestilence, (loosed, as it were a demon from the abyss, to shiver into atoms all that binds the world to Virtue and to Law,) seemed to awaken, as by the sound of an angel's trumpet, to that noblest Chivalry of the Cross—whose faith is the scorn of self—whose hope is beyond the Lazar house—whose feet, already winged for immortality, trample with a conqueror's march upon the graves of Death!

While this the ministry and the office of love,— along that street, in which Adrian and Irene had

met at last—came, singing, reeling, roaring, the dissolute and abandoned crew who had fixed their quarters in the Convent of Santa Maria dei Pazzi, their bravo chief at their head, and a nun (no longer in nun's garments) upon either arm.—“A health to the Plague!” shouted the ruffian—“A health to the Plague!” echoed his frantic Bacchanals—

“ A health to the Plague, may She ever, as now,
Loose the rogue from his chain, and the nun from her
vow ;

To the gaoler a sword—to the captive a key,
Hurrah for Earth’s Curse ! ’tis a blessing to me.”

“ Hollo !” cried the chief, stopping; “ here, Margaretta ; here’s a brave cloak for thee, my girl : silver enow on it to fill thy purse, if it ever grow empty ; which it may, if ever the Plague grow slack.”

“ Nay,” said the girl, who amidst all the havoc of debauch retained much of youth and beauty in her form and face. “ Nay, Guidotto, perhaps it has infection.”

"Pooh, child, silver never infects. Clap it on, clap it on. Besides, fate is fate, and when it is thine hour there will be other means besides the *gavocciolo.*"

So saying, he seized the mantle, threw it roughly over her half-bared shoulders, and dragged her on as before, half pleased with the finery, half frightened with the danger; while gradually died away, along the lurid air and the mournful streets, the chaunt of that most miserable mirth.

CHAP. V.

THE ERROR.

FOR three days, the fatal three days, did Adrian remain bereft of strength and sense. But he was not smitten by the scourge which his devoted and generous nurse had anticipated. It was a fierce and dangerous fever, brought on by the great fatigue, restlessness, and terrible agitation he had undergone.

No professional mediciner could be found to attend him but a good friar, better perhaps skilled in the healing art than many who claimed its monopoly, visited him daily. And in the long and frequent absences to which his other and numerous duties compelled the monk, there was one ever at hand to smooth the pillow, to wipe the brow, to

listen to the moan, to watch the sleep. And even in that dismal office, when, in the frenzy of the sufferer, her name, coupled with terms of passionate endearment, broke from his lips, a thrill of strange pleasure crossed the heart of the betrothed, which she chid as if it were a crime. But even the most unearthly love is selfish in the rapture of being loved ! Words cannot tell, heart cannot divine, the mingled emotions that broke over her when, in some of these incoherent ravings, she dimly understood that *for her* the city had been sought, the death dared, the danger incurred. And as then bending passionately to kiss that burning brow, her tears fell fast over the idol of her youth, the fountains from which they gushed were those, fathomless and countless, which a life could not weep away. Not an impulse of the human and the woman heart that was not stirred ; the adoring gratitude, the meek wonder thus to *be* loved, while deeming it so simple a merit thus *to* love ;—as if all sacrifice *in* her were a thing of course,—*to* her, a virtue nature could not paragon, worlds could not repay ! And there he lay, the victim to his own fearless faith, helpless—dependent upon her—a thing between life

and death, to thank, to serve—to be proud of, yet protect—to compassionate, yet revere—the saver, to be saved ! Never seemed one object to demand at once from a single heart so many and so profound emotions ; the romantic enthusiasm of the girl—the fond idolatry of the bride—the watchful providence of the mother over her child.

And strange to say, with all the excitement of that lonely watch, scarcely stirring from his side, taking food only that her strength might not fail her,—unable to close her eyes—though, from the same cause, she would fain have taken rest, when slumber fell upon her charge—with all such wear and tear of frame and heart, she seemed wonderfully supported. And the holy man marvelled, in each visit, to see the cheek of the nurse still fresh, and her eye still bright. In her own superstition she thought and felt that Heaven gifted her with a preternatural power to be true to so sacred a charge : and in this fancy she did not wholly err ; —for Heaven *did* gift her with that diviner power, when it planted in so soft a heart the enduring might and energy of Affection ! The friar had visited the sick man, late on the third night, and

administered to him a strong sedative—"This night," said he to Irene, "will be the crisis—should he awaken, as I trust he may, with a returning consciousness, and a calm pulse, he will live—if not, young daughter, prepare for the worst. But should you note any turn in the disease, that may excite alarm, or require my attendance, this scroll will inform you where I am if God spare me still, at each hour of the night and morning."

The monk retired and Irene resumed her watch.

The sleep of Adrian was at first broken and interrupted—his features, his exclamations, his gestures, all evinced great agony whether mental or bodily—it seemed, as perhaps it was, a fierce and doubtful struggle between life and death for the conquest of the sleeper. Patient, silent, breathing but by long-drawn gasps, Irene sat at the bed-head. The lamp was removed to the further end of the chamber, and its ray, shaded by the draperies, did not suffice to give to her gaze more than the outline of the countenance she watched. In that awful suspense, all the thoughts that hitherto had stirred her mind lay hushed and mute. She was

only sensible to that unutterable fear which few of us have been happy enough not to know. That crushing weight under which we can scarcely breathe or move, the avalanche over us, freezing and suspended, which we cannot escape from, with which, every moment, we may be buried and overwhelmed. The whole destiny of life was in the chances of that single night ! It was just as Adrian at last seemed to glide into a deeper and serener slumber, that the bells of the death-cart broke with their boding knell the palpable silence of the streets. Now hushed, now revived, as the cart stopped for its gloomy passengers, and coming nearer and nearer after every pause. At length she heard the heavy wheels stop under the very casement, and a voice deep and muffled calling aloud “ Bring out the dead ! ” She rose, and with a noiseless step, passed to secure the door, when the dull lamp gleamed upon the dark and shrouded forms of the Becchini.

“ You have not marked the door, nor set out the body,” said one gruffly, “ but this is the *third night!* He is ready for us.”

“ Hush, he sleeps—away, quick, it is not the Plague that seized him.”

"Not the Plague," growled the Beechino in a disappointed tone, "I thought no other illness dared encroach upon the rights of the gavocciolo!"

"Go, here's money, leave us."

And the grisly carrier sullenly withdrew. The cart moved on, the bell renewed its summons, till slowly and faintly the dreadful larum died in the distance.

Shading the lamp with her hand, Irene stole to the bed-side, fearful that the sound and the intrusion had disturbed the slumberer. But his face was still locked, as in a vice, with that iron sleep. He stirred not—his breath scarcely passed his lips—she felt his pulse, as the wan hand lay on the coverlid—there was a slight heat—she was contented—removed the light, and, retiring to a corner of the room, placed the little cross suspended round her neck upon the table, and prayed—in her intense suffering—to Him who had known death, and who—Son of Heaven though he was, and Sovereign of the Seraphim—had also prayed, in his earthly travail, that the cup might pass away.

The morning broke, not, as in the north, slowly and through shadow, but with the sudden glory with which in those climates Day leaps upon earth—

like a giant from his sleep. A sudden smile—a burnished glow—and night had vanished. Adrian still slept; not a muscle seemed to have stirred; the sleep was even heavier than before; the silence became a burthen upon the air. Now, in that exceeding torpor so like unto death, the solitary watcher became alarmed and terrified. Time passed—morning glided to noon—still not a sound nor motion. The sun was midway in heaven—the friar came not. And now again touching Adrian's pulse, she felt no flutter—she gazed on him, appalled and confounded; surely nought living could be so still and pale. “Was it indeed sleep, might it not be——” She turned away, sick and frozen; her tongue clove to her lips. Why did the father tarry—she would go to him—she would learn the worst—she could forbear no longer. She glanced over the scroll the monk had left her: “From sunrise,” it said, “I shall be at the Convent of the Dominicans. Death has stricken many of the brethren.” The convent was at some distance, but she knew the spot, and fear would wing her steps. She gave one wistful look at the sleeper, and rushed from the house. “I shall see thee

again presently," she murmured. Alas ! what hope can calculate beyond the moment. And who shall claim the tenure of '*The Again!*'

It was not many minutes after Irene had left the room, ere, with a long sigh, Adrian opened his eyes—an altered and another man ; the fever was gone, the reviving pulse beat low indeed, but calm. His mind was once more master of his body, and, though weak and feeble, the danger was past, and life and intellect regained.

" I have slept long," he muttered—" and oh such dreams—and methought I saw Irene, but could not speak to her, and while I attempted to grasp her, her face changed, her form dilated, and I was in the clutch of the foul grave-digger. It is late—the sun is high—I must be up and stirring. Irene is in Lombardy. No, no ; that was a lie, a wicked lie, she is at Florence, I must renew my search."

As this duty came to his remembrance, he rose from the bed—he was amazed at his own debility—at first he could not stand without support from the wall—by degrees, however, he so far regained the mastery of his limbs, as to walk though with

effort and pain. A ravenous hunger preyed upon him, he found some scanty and light food in the chamber, which he devoured eagerly. And with scarce less eagerness laved his enfeebled form and haggard face with the water that stood at hand. He now felt refreshed and invigorated, and began to indue his garments, which he found thrown on a heap beside the bed. He gazed with surprise and a kind of self-compassion upon his emaciated hands and shrunken limbs, and began now to comprehend that he must have had some severe but unconscious illness. “Alone too,” thought he, “no one near to tend me ! Nature my only nurse ! But alas ! alas ! how long a time may thus have been wasted, and my adored Irene —— quick, quick, not a moment more will I lose.”

He soon found himself in the open street ; the air revived him ; and that morning, the first known for weeks, had sprung up the blessed breeze. He wandered on very slowly and feebly till he came to a broad square, from which, in the vista, might be seen one of the principal gates of Florence, and the fig-trees and olive-groves beyond. It was then that a pilgrim of tall stature approached

towards him as from the gate; his hood was thrown back, and gave to view a countenance of great but sad command; a face, in whose high features, massive brow, and proud, unshrinking gaze, shaded by an expression of melancholy more stern than soft, Nature seemed to have written majesty, and Fate disaster. As in that silent and dreary place, these two, the only tenants of the street, now encountered, Adrian stopped abruptly, and said in a startled and doubting voice: "Do I dream still, or do I behold Rienzi?"

The pilgrim paused also, as he heard the name, and gazing long on the attenuated features of the young lord, said: "I am he that was Rienzi! and you, pale shadow, is it in this grave of Italy that I meet with the gay and high Colonna? Alas, young friend," he added in a more relaxed and kindly voice, "hath the Plague not spared the flower of the Roman nobles? Come, I, the cruel and the harsh Tribune, *I* will be thy nurse: he who might have been my brother, shall yet claim from me a brother's care."

With these words, he wound his arm tenderly round Adrian; and the young noble, touched by

his compassion, and agitated by the surprise, leant upon Rienzi's breast in silence.

"Poor youth," resumed the Tribune, for so since rather fallen than deposed he may yet be called; "I ever loved the young; (my brother died young!) and you more than most. What fatality brought thee hither?"

"Irene!" replied Adrian falteringly.

"Is it so, really? Art thou a Colonna, and yet prize the fallen? The same duty has brought me also to the city of Death. From the farthest south—over the mountains of the robber—through the fastnesses of my foes—through towns in which the herald proclaimed in my ear the price of my head—I have passed hither, on foot and alone, safe under the wings of the Almighty One. Young man, thou shouldst have left this task to one who bears a wizard's life, and whom Heaven and Earth yet reserve for an appointed end!"

The Tribune said this in a deep and inward voice; and in his raised eye and solemn brow might be seen how much his reverses had deepened his fanaticism, and added even to the sanguineness of his hopes.

“ But,” asked Adrian, withdrawing gently from Rienzi’s arm, “ thou knowest, then, where Irene is to be found, let us go together. Lose not a moment in this talk, time is of inestimable value, and a moment in this city is often but the border to eternity.”

“ Right,” said Rienzi, awakening to his object. “ But fear not, I *have dreamt* that I shall save her, the gem and darling of my house. Fear not, I have no fear.”

“ Know you where to seek?” said Adrian, impatiently; “ the convent holds far other guests.”

“ Ha! so said my dream!”

“ Talk not now of dreams,” said the lover, “ but if you have no other guide, let us part at once in quest of her; I will take yonder street, you take the opposite, and at sunset let us meet in the same spot.”

“ Rash man,” said the Tribune, with great solemnity, “ scoff not at the visions which Heaven makes a parable to its Chosen. Thou seekest counsel of thy human wisdom; I, less presumptuous, follow the hand of the mysterious Providence, moving even now before my gaze as a pillar of light, through the wilderness of dread. Ay, meet we

here at sunset, and prove whose guide is the most unerring. If my dream tell me true, I shall see my sister living, ere the sun reach yonder hill, and by a church dedicated to St. Mark."

The grave earnestness with which Rienzi spoke, impressed Adrian with a hope his reason would not acknowledge. He saw him depart with that proud and stately step to which his sweeping garments gave a yet more imposing dignity, and then passed up the street to the right hand. He had not got half way when he felt himself pulled by the mantle. He turned and saw the shapeless mask of a Becchino.

"I feared you were sped, and that another had cheated me of my office," said the grave-digger, "seeing that you returned not to the old prince's palace. You don't know me from the rest of us I see, but I am the one you told to seek ——."

"Irene!"

"Yes, Irene di Gabrini, you promised ample reward."

"You shall have it."

"Follow me."

The Becchino strode on, and soon arrived at a

mansion. He knocked twice at the porter's entrance, an old woman cautiously opened the door ; " Fear not, good aunt," said the grave-digger, " this is the young lord I spoke to thee of. Thou sayest thou hadst two ladies in the palace, who alone survived of all the lodgers, and their names were Bianca di Medici, and—what was the other ? "

" Irene di Gabrini, a Roman lady. But I told thee this was the fourth day they left the house, terrified by the deaths within it."

" Thou didst so—and was there anything remarkable in the dress of the Signora di Gabrini ? "

" Yes, I have told thee, a blue mantle, such as I have rarely seen, wrought with silver."

" Was the broidery that of stars, silver stars," exclaimed Adrian, " with a sun in the centre ? "

" It was ! "

" Alas ! alas ! the arms of the Tribune's family ! I remember how I praised the mantle the first day she wore it—the day on which we were betrothed !" And the lover at once conjectured the secret sentiment which had induced Irene to retain so carefully a robe so endeared by association.

" You know no more of your lodgers ? "

“ Nothing.”

“ And is this all you have learnt, knave ? ” cried Adrian.

“ Patience. I must bring you from proof to proof, and link to link, in order to win my reward. Follow Signor.”

The Becchino then passing through the several lanes and streets, arrived at another house of less magnificent size and architecture. Again he tapped thrice at the parlour door, and this time came forth a man withered, old, and palsied, whom death seemed to disdain to strike.

“ Signor Astuccio,” said the Becchino, “ pardon me ; but I told thee I might trouble thee again. This is the gentleman who wants to know, what is often best unknown—but that’s not my affair. Did a lady—young and beautiful—with dark hair, and of a slender form, enter this house, stricken with the first symptom of the plague, three days since.”

“ Ay, thou knowest that well enough—and thou knowest still better—that she has departed these two days ; it was quick work with her, quicker than with most ! ”

“ Did she wear anything remarkable ? ”

“ Yes, troublesome man, a blue cloak, with stars of silver.”

“ Couldst thou guess aught of her previous circumstances ? ”

“ No, save that she raved much about the nunnery of Santa Maria dei Pazzi, and bravos, and sacrilege.”

“ Are you satisfied, Signor,” asked the gravedigger, with an air of triumph, turning to Adrian. “ But no, I will satisfy thee better, if thou hast courage. Wilt thou follow ? ”

“ I comprehend thee ; lead on. Courage ! what is there on earth now to fear ? ”

Muttering to himself—“ Ay, leave me alone. I have a head worth something ; I ask no gentleman to go by my word ; I will make his own eyes the judge of what my trouble is worth,” the gravedigger now led the way through one of the gates a little out of the city. And here under a shed sat six of his ghastly and ill-omened brethren, with spades and pick-axes at their feet.

His guide now turned round to Adrian, whose face was set, and resolute in despair.

"Fair Signor," said he, with some touch of lingering compassion, "wouldst thou really convince thine own eyes and heart ; the sight may appal, the contagion may destroy, thee,—if, indeed, as it seems to me, Death has not already written '*mine*' upon thee."

"Raven of bode and woe," answered Adrian, "seest thou not that all I shrink from is thy voice and aspect ? Show me her I seek, living or dead."

"I will show her to you, then," said the Becchino sullenly, "such as two nights since she was committed to my charge. Line and lineament may already be swept away, for the Plague hath a rapid besom ; but I have left that upon her by which you will know the Becchino is no liar. Bring hither the torches, comrades, and lift the door. Never stare ; it's the gentleman's whim, and he'll pay it well."

Turning to the right, while Adrian mechanically followed his conductors,—a spectacle whose dire philosophy crushes as with a wheel all the pride of mortal man—the spectacle of that vault in which earth hides all that on earth flourished, rejoiced, exulted—awaited his eye !

The Becchini lifted a ponderous grate, lowered their torches (scarcely needed, for through the aperture rushed, with a hideous glare, the light of the burning sun,) and motioned to Adrian to advance. He stood upon the summit of the abyss and gazed below.

* * * * *

It was a large deep and circular space, like the bottom of an exhausted well. In niches cut into the walls of earth around, lay, duly coffined, those who had been the earliest victims of the plague, when the Becchino's market was not yet glutted, and priest followed, and friend mourned, the dead. But on the floor below, *there* was the loathsome horror ! Huddled and matted together,—some naked, some in shrouds already black and rotten,—lay the later guests, the unshrive[n] and unblest ! The torches, the sun, streamed broad and red over Corruption in all its stages, from the pale blue tint and swollen shape, to the moistened undistinguishable mass, or the riddled bones, where yet clung, in strips and tatters, the black and mangled flesh. In many the face remained almost perfect, while the rest of the body was but bone ;

the long hair, the human face, surmounting the grisly skeleton. There, was the infant, still on the mother's breast; there, was the lover stretched across the dainty limbs of his adored ! The rats (for they clustered in numbers to that feast), disturbed, not scared, sate up from their horrid meal as the light glimmered over them, and thousands of them lay round, stark and dead, poisoned by that they fed on ! There, too, the wild satire of the grave-diggers had cast, though stripped of their gold and jewels, the emblems that spoke of departed rank ;—the broken wand of the Councillor ; the General's baton ; the Priestly Mitre ! The foul and livid exhalations gathered like flesh itself, fungous and putrid, upon the walls, and the —



But who shall detail the ineffable and unimaginable horrors that reigned over the Palace where the Great King received the prisoners whom the sword of the Pestilence had subdued ?

But through all that crowded court—crowded with beauty and with birth, with the strength of the young and the honours of the old, and the valour of the brave, and the wisdom of the learned, and the wit of the scorner, and the piety of the faithful—one only figure attracted Adrian's eye. Apart from the rest, a late comer—the long locks streaming far and dark over arm and breast—lay a female, the face turned partially aside, the little seen not recognisable even by the mother of the dead,—but wrapped round in that fatal mantle, on which, though blackened and tarnished, was yet visible the starry heraldry assumed by those who claimed the name of the proud Tribune of Rome. Adrian saw no more—he fell back in the arms of the grave-diggers: when he recovered, he was still without the gates of Florence—reclined upon a green mound—his guide stood beside him—holding his steed by the bridle as it grazed patiently on the neglected grass. The other brethren of the axe had resumed their seat under the shed.

“So you have revived; ah! I thought it was only the effluvia; few stand it as we do. And so,

as your search is over, deeming you would now be quitting Florence if you have any sense left to you, I went for your good horse. I have fed him since your departure from the palace. Indeed I fancied he would be my perquisite, but there are plenty as good. Come, young Sir, mount. I feel a pity for you, I know not why, except that you are the only one I have met for weeks who seem to care for another more than for yourself. I hope you are satisfied now that I showed some brains, eh ! in your service, and as I have kept my promise, you'll keep yours."

" Friend," said Adrian, " here is gold enough to make thee rich ; here too is a jewel that merchants will tell thee princes might vie to purchase. Thou seemest honest, despite thy calling, or thou mightest have robbed and murdered me long since. Do me one favour more."

" By my poor mother's soul, yes."

" Take yon—yon clay from that fearful place. Inter it in some quiet and remote spot—apart—alone ! You promise me—you swear it—it is well. And now help me on my horse."

“ Farewell Italy, and if I die not with this stroke,
may I die as befits at once honour and despair—
with trumpet and banner round me—in a well-
fought field against a worthy foe!—save a knightly
death nothing is left to live for!”

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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